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ABSTRACT

This volume consists of reports on the status and function of lower secondary comprehensive school systems in four countries with contrasting cultures and educational traditions: Denmark, France, the United Kingdom as represented by Scotland, and the United States as represented by Maryland and Minnesota. The volume begins with an analysis by Professor Malcolm Skilbeck of Australia of the main issues and trends to emerge in comprehensive middle schools, based on contributions from representatives from 18 countries. Next are extensive reports, prepared by separate reviewers, on all aspects of schooling for adolescents in each of the countries . The report on Denmark is prepared by Professor Urban Dahllof of Sweden, Dr. David H. Hargreaves of the United Kingdom, and M. Andre Lafond, Inspector General of the ministry of education in France. The report on France is prepared by Professor Skilbeck, Professor Pierre Vanbergen of Belgium, and Professor Marzio Barbagli of Italy. The report on the United Kingdom (Scotland) is prepared by Professor Dahllof, Dr. Hargreaves, and M. Lafond, while the report on the United States (Maryland and Minnesota) is by Professor Skilbeck and Professor Denis Kallen of France. References are included with each report.(TE)

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ADOLESCENTS AND COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOLING

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ADOLESCENTS AND COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOLING

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Four years ago the OECD published a study of compulsory schooling (Compulsory Schooling in a Changing World, Paris, 1983) which revealed that, although the primary or elementary cycle continued to face such difficulties as how to identify and diagnose the particular needs of slow learners in good time, it was essentially stable and well regarded by parents and the public at large. In contrast, many countries reported that the lower secondary or junior high school, which is concerned with the 11 to 16 age group, was presenting serious problems and arousing public concern. Many young people in the age group appeared to be gaining no benefit from long hours spent in school. In certain urban schools indiscipline and vandalism were rife; some students were regularly playing truant; others were simply dropping out before the statutory leaving age.

These difficulties of the lower secondary school were occurring against a historical context in which the extension of compulsory schooling in most countries had paralleled or been closely followed by the institution of a comprehensive model of organisation. The United States, of course, had adopted such a model from the very inception of its public school system. In most countries, however, the model had been a recent innovation, even though it had spread so fast that only a minority of OECD countries still retained selective schools.

Considering the key place of the lower secondary comprehensive school in the education systems of so many countries and the problems surrounding it, the OECD Education Committee decided in 1983 to undertake an inquiry into how it was functioning at the present time in four countries with contrasting cultures and educational traditions. For this purpose the collaboration of four countries was obtained: Denmark, France, the United Kingdom, as represented by Scotland, and the United States, as represented by the States of Maryland and Minnesota.

The present volume contains reports on each of the four countries prepared by independent reviewers. These are preceded by an analysis of the main issues and trends to emerge, which takes into account contributions from representatives of eighteen countries who attended a specially-convened meeting at the OECD headquarters at which delegations from the four countries freely explained their policies and problems. The analysis has been prepared by Professor Malcolm Skilbeck who expresses his own ideas and impressions. The text has been prepared for publication by John Lowe of the OECD Secretariat. It is published on the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD and therefore does not necessarily reflect the views of any Member government.

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I

MAIN ISSUES AND TRENDS

by

Professor Malcolm Skilbeck
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COMMITMENT TO THE COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

Comprehensive schooling has necessarily developed in widely different national contexts. In the post-war decades, the period when it became an element in the social reconstruction and economic renewal of older societies, reform involved not so much systematic experimentation as undertaking policy commitments and introducing new structures to be tested on the ground.

Even allowing for the important preparatory procedures that took place in Norway and Sweden, no nation adopted a strict research and development approach, with rigorous surveys of needs, resources and feasibility, carefully monitored trials and experiments followed by scientific evaluation and then the formation of policies for system-wide implementation. It would have been unrealistic to expect such streamlined planning, since education is an on-going concern that cannot be interrupted and manipulated in mechanistic fashion. In any event, political considerations militated against such an approach. Mass school systems existed and reform and innovation could only adapt and extend them, introducing the comprehensive principle by degrees and with many local variations and nuances according to existing attitudes and practices and available resources.

The case of the United States is exceptional since the origins of comprehensive secondary education date back to the last century. There is today a mature system or network of systems, which have been subject over time to wave upon wave of innovation superimposed upon what appear to be deeply embedded and enduring structures that are so ubiquitous as to be a defining feature of American society. They seem capable of withstanding the most drastic criticism, such as those following the launch of Sputnik 1 in the late fifties and those arising from contemporary anxieties about economic and political challenges from other nations.

Notwithstanding freely acknowledged shortcomings in all four countries, and even proposals from scattered critics to restore selective secondary education in Europe or to abandon the common school in the United States of America, what is immediately striking is that commitment by governments to publicly provided comprehensive education for the middle years is not in question. This goes beyond paying lip-service to a principle, since there is a concentration of energy and resources on improving the functioning of the system. Thus, the United States, despite the current vogue of searching educational self-appraisal, is strengthening and not abridging the place of the neighbourhood school in American society. Denmark, France and Scotland, whatever the vicissitudes of practice, are engaged in the continuing development of schooling along comprehensive lines. How far these developments will unfold as envisaged is another question, given, for example, political divisions in France and the admitted difficulty of constructing a "comprehensive curriculum" and "comprehensive school organisation". But there is nothing remarkable about perceiving a credibility gap between declared policy and the process of implementing it, between the exigencies of practice and the rhetoric of the public and professional media.

The comprehensive school is variously interpreted but incorporates at least these characteristic elements at the lower secondary level:

-- It is a neighbourhood or community common school serving a given catchment area unless, as in the United States, an overriding legal obligation to achieve ethnic mixing requires bussing, but even then the neighbourhood principle is the point of departure.

-- It does not exclude the existence of, or indeed public financial support for private schools.

-- It offers an approximately common curriculum containing elements of a broad, general education for all students at least up to age fourteen.

-- Internal differentiation and grouping of students according to aptitude and ability are widely practised, yet there is an "understanding" that, where possible, at least some mixed grouping will occur, and a policy of mixing is adopted as a norm either for age levels or for subject areas.

-- Positive efforts are made to plot educationally defensible paths and routes through the curriculum for all students without special favour to minorities unless they are shown to be significantly disadvantaged.

Additional defining elements can be adduced but, as intimated in the Danish report, it is necessary to distinguish between the specific characteristics of comprehensive schools and those that apply to any type of school. It is accepted that quite divergent paths may be followed by students from ages thirteen or fourteen. Public policy accepts and indeed promotes such stratification from ages fourteen or fifteen onwards in many countries. This seems to be accepted on grounds of future occupational choice, personal student interest and differences in school attainment and performance, and indeed the practical difficulty of defining a common educational experience for all beyond two years or so. If divergence is pushed too far, a resemblance to the old separate forms of post-elementary education begins to emerge, with the risk of status differentials and very unequal outcomes under the guise of meeting different individual and group needs. The principle of comprehensive schooling would surely no longer apply if neither a common curriculum nor any form of mixed grouping were practised, if institutional separation occurred and if it were to be accepted that students were bound in occupational directions with quite different and unequal social status.

There is no doubt that while the countries under review are at, or moving towards, the stage of removing distinctions between schools, none has found wholly convincing ways of overcoming internal distinctions within schools. In other words, comprehensive schooling has had considerable success in achieving its purpose of democratisation by creating the common school in place of the old selective system in which certain schools catered for an academic elite. But the elite problem has been transferred into the school itself where status differentials linger on. In France, for example, comprehensive policy has not eliminated status differences among collège teachers; in Scotland, despite the most strenuous efforts, the academic streams enjoy status advantages.

The fundamental rationale for the continuance in the United States, Denmark and Scotland, and the full development in France, of the comprehensive school to approximately age fourteen years and beyond, although not always explicit, relates to the long-standing and usually rather loosely defined belief in expanded educational opportunity, delayed choice of occupation and consequent specialisation and a shared or common culture. These are not the only assumptions and values, however, that inform the drive towards comprehensiveness.

The modernisation process in the post-industrial era is also propelled by a pervasive belief in efficiency, articulation of disparate elements and institutional rationality. For example, the disparity between traditionally divided schools -- gymnasium, expanded elementary, technical and so on -- and scientific knowledge of the nature and distribution of human abilities and interests has become too great in respect of childhood and early adolescence to be tolerated. The allocation of young people to a hierarchy of separate types of school according to crude diagnostic instruments, such as the eleven plus examination in the United Kingdom, has been abandoned under critical condemnation.

The four systems under review are located towards the fully comprehensive end of a spectrum of educational structures. In France, where there seems to be most ambivalence about a policy commitment, no evidence was presented to suggest a retreat from the comprehensive principle. On the contrary, the reform of the collège is justified and supported precisely as part of a long-term trend towards democratisation and modernisation through the establishment of a common school in place of the old stratified system. The questions raised are all to do with the feasibility of practical implementation, given the weight of tradition and powerful cross currents in French culture and society. These apply as much to the ambition to introduce into schools and society a culture technologique alongside the classical literary culture, as to the implementation of a fully comprehensive form of school organisation through the unstreamed classes and individualisation sought in the collège reform movement.

THEMES AND CONCERNS

Allowing for the difficulty of finding criteria for comparing and contrasting the practices of comprehensive schooling, as distinct from policy declarations and initiatives, we can find in the four country reports a distinct set of themes and concerns. To begin with, it is widely agreed that the comprehensive school for young adolescents has still to show its full capabilities. If the utilitarian principle of "the greatest happiness of the greatest number" is part of the underlying rationale, then the outcome is not up to expectations either for society as a whole or for individual students, and the educators themselves are among the first to highlight this. The aspiration is there and the policies seem to be in place but, somehow, the practice is felt by many participants and commentators not to be measuring up sufficiently. The reviewers were most aware of this disquiet in the United States, where there is a back-wash effect from the numerous critical reports on high school education, and in France, where a lively debate on standards has been stimulated by ministerial intervention. In Scotland, and to a lesser extent in Denmark, concern is expressed about the apparent inability of the school to engage the interests and energies of a disturbingly high proportion of the age group. Reforms currently under way in curricula and examinations are addressing this issue, but it is too soon to estimate their success in giving a new deal to the early school-leaver.

Secondly, a distinction must be drawn between a system-wide commitment to the comprehensive school, which is largely agreed, and the way in which this commitment expresses itself in practice: organisation at the school level, curriculum, pedagogy, the training and further education of teachers and the management of resources. All are subject to criticism and reappraisal and there is evidence of significant reorientation in many countries. In the United States, Maryland school districts generally affirm the advantages of the middle school, whereas in Minnesota the junior high school is widely, but not uniformly, preferred. In Scotland, students are allocated to a unitary, four-year plus secondary school. Curricular elements also vary although there is acceptance everywhere of the need for a common core.

Thirdly, pupil achievement seems neither better nor worse in comprehensive than in selective systems and is in any case notoriously difficult to ascertain and aggregate. On the other hand, the standards issue being very much alive, there are changes of direction, as in France, where the collège reform lays less emphasis on pedagogical innovation predicated on participation and equality and greater emphasis on raising standards in "the basics". Even so, "basics" are not the same as traditional academic subjects: they include technology, communications, job training, citizenship, natural sciences, electronics and materials science.

Fourthly, as in most OECD countries, it is widely, if reluctantly, accepted that, for the foreseeable future, expansion of the educational base either is not necessary for demographic reasons or is not possible for economic ones. Governments experiencing difficulty in restraining public expenditure within policy targets tend to collapse the former into the latter argument and are unwilling or unable to take advantage of favourable enrolment trends to undertake such structural changes as the development of educational programmes for preschool age children or full provision for mainstreaming the handicapped or disadvantaged or response to union demands for better pay for teachers. In such a climate there is considerable frustration at the gap, which if anything is widening, between reform proposals, ideals and initiatives on the one hand, and the average conditions of schooling on the other.

Fifthly, there has been rising concern among policy-makers, administrators, researchers and others about the need for new or alternative methods of financing public education or parts of it and new ways of economising in view of the complex political as well as financial relationships between consumers and providers of resources. No less significant than the concern with resources, and perhaps closely related to it, has been a surge of interest in the issue of quality, which derives to a considerable degree from the inconclusive international debate since the mid-seventies over standards. Indeed, placing the two concerns and sets of trends together, a steady state of or a reduction in resource provision, and hotly contested claims about mediocre or declining performance standards, are a means of orienting towards one of the several crisis points in the move towards mass secondary education and the establishment of a common, basic school as the principal instrument of delivery. It can scarcely be said that in the responses of the four countries this particular issue is being taken forward in any practical way -- a good illustration of agenda-building rather than problem resolution.

There are two further concerns that bear comment: first, the place of private or independent schools; secondly, the debate over whether or not to continue upwards into the middle and later adolescent years the principle of a common curriculum.

The absolute numbers of children attending private schools remain relatively low in most but not all OECD countries, yet there are definite indications of a quickening interest among parents in the value of diversity, healthy competition and freedom of choice. The United States is not alone in experiencing a steady "voting with their feet" move towards private education by the middle classes. In Denmark, the private school issue was identified by the reviewers as a very recent manifestation worthy of note.

It is not the purpose of this report to identify the alternative opportunities available, including the often ingenious ways in which private sector education can command public finance, gain tax benefits and otherwise cushion costs falling on individual families, or to comment on the concordat whereby in France private schooling flourishes but the ultimate authority of the State over the curriculum is nonetheless asserted. But it is necessary to draw attention to the existence, and the robust sound health, of alternatives available to parents who are dissatisfied with some aspect or other of the publicly provided and maintained comprehensive school or just want something different.

Private schooling assumes several forms: the French private schools, heavily subsidised by the State, are very different from the expensive and exclusive independent schools to be found in parts of Scotland and the United States. But there is an issue for the common school principle in the very existence of a large and flourishing private sector. Readiness to entertain diversity and pluralism without paying serious attention to the possible consequences could eventually lead to social discord.

The second concern is with the occupational preparation or training functions of the secondary school as a whole. Notably in those countries experiencing the highest rates of youth unemployment, but to a degree also in other countries, critics are challenging the provision of large elements of a core curriculum and extension of general education throughout the period of adolescence. The challenge is not always directed specifically at the earlier adolescent years of schooling but it certainly has implications for them.

Although it was Scotland that was under review, it is worth drawing attention here to the entire United Kingdom where, through the agency of the Manpower Services Commission and with the willing agreement of the Department of Education and Science, large inroads are being made into the common curriculum of general education through the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative for 14-16 year-olds in comprehensive schools. Proposals for a new, two-year Youth Training Scheme coming into operation in 1986 will, moreover, strengthen the division that now occurs at age 16, the permitted leaving age, with a significant minority taking work-based and work-related courses quite separate from their peers who remain in the secondary school system. Over the longer run such a development could result in something like the style of education and training for the whole 16-18 age group in Germany's schooling plus the work-training dual system. But, what this produces is not comprehensive schooling, certainly not in Germany, but at best a comprehensive framework. At what point down the age scale does stratification then stop?

The United Kingdom developments, in different guises, are visible in each of the countries reviewed. Although it would be premature in the case of Denmark and the United States to talk of a bifurcation of secondary schooling, we cannot overlook the challenge posed by changes in the labour market, not only in respect of the volume of work opportunities available to young people but, no less important, of the changing knowledge and skill requirements. The school curriculum as well as school organisation must undergo change.

In France, the collèges have been challenged by the Minister himself to improve quality and concentrate their energies on the world of the present and the future. The powerful interest of policy-makers and administrators in technology is evidence of disquiet over trends in general education where, according to some analysts, history and national traditions are neglected and, according to others, a literary and classical culture denies proper attention to modern science and technology. It is too soon to say whether, in France as in other countries, this disquiet will result in a reaffirmation of the two cultures thesis, which is always lurking in the background: for preparing the professional and administrative elite, an academic education informed by modern technology but still highly theoretical; for the future middle-level operatives and workers, a much more practical and vocationally-oriented education with corresponding, quite separate, routes through the school system.

THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

The structures have been assembled. Can the curricula and pedagogy be reformed as well? A mixture of political and ideological challenges and scepticism over their claims to bring about general social amelioration and educational advance accompanied the introduction of comprehensive schools. These challenges have continued with occasional crescendos, especially in the United Kingdom and the United States, but are no longer the heart of the matter. In the course of the four country reviews discussed here, it was much less frequently these superficial kinds of criticism that surfaced than a finer grained questioning of policies and operations. These may be considered by reference to the closely-related components of curriculum, pedagogy, school organisation and the teachers, which will now be taken in turn.

Curriculum

There is, in all four country reviews, a wide-ranging questioning of prevailing structures and priorities in the curriculum. This may be summarised as an apprehension that the comprehensive school as an organisational entity has been to a large degree stabilised but that there is as yet no corresponding curriculum. In Denmark, for example, the reviewers are puzzled by the apparent abandonment of the liberating and broadening concerns mentioned in the report U90: Danish Educational Planning in a Social Context at the End of the 20th Century (Schultz Forlag, Copenhagen, 1978).

In Scotland, the reviewers refer to the orderly, national movement of diagnosis, evaluation and development. Greater attention is being paid to learning processes and teacher-pupil relations but there are still traces in the dominant model of the classical selective secondary school, heavily cognitive and intellectualised in bias, preparing for higher education or professional life, with its curriculum structured through clearcut disciplines, texts and examinations. The Munn-Dunning programme of reforms, which is discussed at some length by the Scottish reviewers, intends to go well beyond this and to make almost a fresh start. The vigorous implementation programme is, however, still in a relatively early stage. It will be closely watched as an example of a multi-faceted national strategy of renewal and development of a system which has traditionally given prominence to intellectual achievement and high standards.

Even in the United States, which began to move away from the assumptions and expectations of selective and elitist education in the late nineteenth century, academic subjects, sectionalised into a multiplicity of "units", dominate the curriculum. Attempts to develop a radically different viewpoint, such as that of the "life adjustment" movement in the fifties, have been damagingly criticised for their mediocrity and ineffectiveness. The drive of the recent wave of reports on high school education is towards more academic rigour, a more clearly and closely defined set of academic disciplines in the core and a sharp increase in testing. The United States reviewers challenge this trend, seeing several of the national reports as a valuable resource for educators, in heightening public interest in educational reform, but questionable in the way they seem to narrow and harden the curriculum and limit the creativity of lower secondary and middle schooling.

And, indeed, there are senior education administrators who argue for keeping children younger for a longer time by means of a curriculum developed according to their perceived needs and interests and giving stress to the humanities, affective qualities and personal values. There is something of a mismatch between the ideals of these administrators and some of the recommendations being proposed.

In *France*, at the time of the review, it was already proving exceedingly difficult to diffuse throughout the education system the more far-reaching curricular aims expressed in two recent national reports on the *collèges* and on technology. As in the other countries, this is partly because of limited programmes of curriculum development, partly because of some obscurity about the practical problems of implementation, and partly no doubt because of the interest of many professionals in retaining the balance of forces within the existing curriculum. Teachers are the key to curriculum change and it is too much to expect a transformation of the ethos and cultural values that inspire the established curriculum or their displacement by a broadly-defined technological culture or modernisation process unless their involvement in innovation becomes the focus of attention.

On the evidence they amassed, the reviewers detect a general curricular trend towards concentration and consolidation. The core is being more narrowly defined in practice despite a rhetorical emphasis on broadening, and the need for, up-to-date, relevant, socially useful knowledge and skills of wide general application. Why should this be so? Part of the explanation must lie with the preoccupation with performance and achievement by students, the growing emphasis on tests and testing or, as in Scotland, on the overall reform of school examinations, and the links between school curricula and utilitarian and narrow concepts of vocational preparation. All these forces and factors, with powerful public and political backing, seem to be containing the more radical and expansionist tendencies in the comprehensive movement. Some might see this as a long overdue attempt to impose coherence and order. On the other hand, an uncritical move towards concentration could result in an even sharper disjunction between school curricula and the external environment, to say nothing of its alienating effects on many students. Where far-reaching change and novelty are being experienced, the social need for greater initiative, creativity, self-confidence, self-reliance, personal effectiveness and practical competence of various kinds, together with a quick grasp of new forces and trends in society and intellectual flexibility, might indicate an altogether different curriculum scenario for the school. But that scenario requires more resources for research and development, a climate more favourable to innovation and experimentation and a greater public confidence in the social value and effectiveness of schooling than seems to be generally the case.

The scene is thus puzzling: there is widespread agreement that greater attention to curriculum than to other issues is desirable and yet there are divergent, even contradictory, movements. Bold and forward-looking ideas and proposals are advanced, but they are accompanied by traditionalist language and ways of addressing problems. The core curriculum -- basic, essential and fundamental for all learners -- is by general consent badly in need of overhaul.

Pedagogy and school organisation

One striking feature of the four reviews is a lack of evidence of really significant pedagogical reform. Plenty of good intentions and desiderata are expressed but there is a dearth of concrete detail about what is happening in the classroom. Schooling processes are failing to adopt pedagogical innovations to match the structural changes that have occurred through the introduction of the comprehensive school. The issue is uncomfortably similar to that of the curriculum: the lived reality of the school is not fulfilling goals and expectations as well as it might.

Take the vexed issue of student grouping. Whatever may be proclaimed as a social value in mixing children of different abilities, aptitudes and interests, the prevailing practice, with the interesting exception of Denmark, is differentiation not on an individual basis but according to group characteristics. "Appropriate differentiation" is expressed as a popular option but as to whether this means anything other than old-fashioned streaming and setting is left unclear. The typical learning unit, in practice, remains the class, in a classroom with a didactic teacher. Of course, exceptions exist and some of them were noted by the reviewers.

Their own schooling and training, conditions of service and access to resources have conditioned teachers to an instructional mode, which is heavily reinforced by contextual variables: budgets, staff/student ratios, the design and equipping of schools, the social organisation of teachers within the school unit and in their professional associations, and the expectations of the public that, ultimately, the school will instruct, control and direct children's learning in essentially familiar patterns. All of this amounts to pressure towards conformity with established practice and emphasis on competitive learning, reinforced by grading and testing using norm-referencing. The expanding technology of testing can readily reinforce a pedagogy grounded in the imparting of factual knowledge.

In the United States there is a priori the greatest opportunity for pedagogical and organisational innovation owing to the substantial provision of resources, especially in the better-off school districts, the long history of research and experimentation in education and a social climate generally favourable to organisational innovation. The reviewers, however, although drawing attention to a number of highly creative examples of pedagogy and school organisation, including cooperative learning, feel bound to emphasize the powerful mechanisms of control and competition that seem to become widespread.

The school as a "tight ship" makes some sense to hard-pressed principals and teachers, and may suit parents and even, for the time being, students, but is it a sound training in democratic participation or for life in a technologically rich society? Will all students really participate actively in their own learning or even stay in school in such a controlled environment?

There is one area of school life where very promising developments relevant to this discussion have occurred, and that is careers advice, counselling, pastoral care and aspects of personal and social education, where the focus is on students' home circumstances, life problems and expectations for the future. Examples are to be found in all four systems but, of course, they tend to be at the edges of the formal structure of curriculum and pedagogy. Moreover, they are usually costly in terms of staff and the first to suffer when financial cuts have to be made.

It is necessary to ask, finally, why the earlier aspirations of comprehensive education to develop a truly innovatory pedagogy is no longer regarded by policy-makers and administrators as a high priority. The testimony of many of those interviewed by the reviewers suggested that the aspiration remained among many of the actors in the schools. The problem seems to be more one of ways and means and of practical demonstrations and encouragement than of lack of conviction.

Teachers and principals

It is a truism that successful outcomes to educational policies and programmes require a skilled and committed teaching force. Less obvious is what kind of teaching force is needed to bring about reform and improvements in the middle years of schooling? That question has large consequences for the selection, initial training and further professional development of teachers, their conditions of service, salaries and the kinds of roles they may be expected to perform in schools. There are surprising divergences both in existing practical arrangements and in directions proposed for the future and between, as well as within, countries. The role of the teacher is plainly in need of clarification.

At one extreme, the teacher is challenged to display a high level of creativity and professional judgement and responsibility while conforming to an apparatus of directives and controls and performing the role of an instructor using prescribed courses and texts. At the other, the model teacher is expected to be autonomous, a self-motivated and self-directed professional free to select, design and construct curricula and teaching materials, though not to deviate too far from cultural norms.

Another polarisation concerns whether teachers are seen to be performing a socially prestigious role and earning a good salary or whether they are viewed as low-grade professionals meriting no higher a salary than a moderately skilled industrial worker. A further set of contrasts is to be found within the teaching profession itself where, in some situations, status differences, inequalities in conditions of service, and internecine union warfare present a picture of divided loyalties. All these contrasts may be illustrated by reference to the individual reviews.

There appears to be no shared set of perceptions and values regarding the teacher's status, role, functions and mission corresponding to the common understanding of what the comprehensive school is meant to be for. The teachers' world has yet to receive the detailed appraisal and reconstruction that the comprehensive movement envisages. Yet, full realisation of the earlier vision of comprehensive reform cannot be achieved unless the work of the teacher is put on to a new footing. A dissatisfied teaching force, which feels itself undervalued, underpaid, exposed to difficult working conditions and at the mercy of outside directives will not readily participate in the exacting processes of rethinking curricula and pedagogical approaches. Some of the recent United States reports on high schools recognise this and there are controversial moves to introduce significant differentiations into the teachers' status, with substantial pay differentiation for meritorious performance and in response to market forces. In France, there is growing recognition that, though teacher status is important, it is not enough, and the centre of attention must move to the life and work of the teacher within the school setting. This implies greater freedom and a high regard for the teachers' professionalism. Yet, the school setting itself is by no means unproblematic. Too often it is the preserve of a certain kind of teacher for whom the parent is a trespasser and the State a far from beneficent guide.

It is significant that much attention is now being turned to the role of school leaders. In the United States, there is a shift from viewing the principal as a manager and slick administrator, and to desiring all round educational leadership. Elsewhere, there is a strong body of opinion that, in order to come more seriously to grips with problems of pedagogical and curricular reform, the actors -- leaders, teachers, parents and students and specialists -- must be brought to the centre of the stage.

Assessment and evaluation

Allusions have been made in preceding pages to the moves in several OECD countries towards expanding and strengthening the methods used for assessing students and teachers and evaluating the performance of schools. In the American, French and Scottish reviews, the issues arising are discussed with some scepticism, despite acceptance of the necessity for well-grounded monitoring practices. Reservations are expressed over the quantity and pervasiveness of student testing, especially in some parts of the United States, and the construction of large-scale assessment systems which leave teachers relatively little scope and freedom. The combined effects of these trends seem to be at odds with other moves: broadening the role of schooling on the one side, and narrowing it down by assessment on the other, erecting elaborate mechanisms of control and direction while wishing to trust, and strengthen the hand of, the teacher.

In Denmark, it is being suggested that more and better tests are needed as aids to teachers and to reassure the community about the effectiveness of its teachers. In the United States, it is being argued that tests have contributed positively to raising levels of student achievement and that emphasis should be on student success, not failure. In France, both student testing and evaluation of schools and of teachers are considered socially and politically important during a period of public allegation of declining standards. The reform in Scotland, it is said, includes renovation of the public examination system, yet to be fully accepted by the universities, and still does not go far enough to meet the needs of low-attaining pupils. Clearly, in all four countries, official representatives see a place for state or nation-wide testing, more emphasis on evaluation of performance and more use made of reliable data for purposes of accountability as well as pursuing higher standards. The reviewers, by contrast, were generally of the opinion that the balance is shifting too far towards mechanisms and controls, external to the teaching-learning process and the specific school environment.

The student in the school

Policies are claimed to be formulated with students' needs in mind but seldom negotiated with students themselves; new curricula, pedagogy and teaching methods are introduced into schools without prior consultation with the learners. Is it surprising, therefore, that schools are often perceived by students as boring, custodial places? Where, as in many schools in Denmark and the United States, there is close consultation with parents, students are felt to be adequately represented. Student representation on class and school committees does exist to a degree but it is unusual to find it at the centre of educational decision-making. There are many reasons for this, the most compelling being the immaturity of the students themselves. It is a question, though, how far school practices themselves foster and feed upon that immaturity instead of seeing it as a developmental opportunity.

To be sure, such policy concerns as equality of opportunity and delayed career choice have highly personal and individual implications which are often followed up in ways that directly involve students. We need to consider, however, to what extent these concerns are addressed in ways that are meaningful not only to policy-makers, administrators, principals and teachers, but to the students themselves. This is perhaps a less threatening way into the student participation issue than direct student involvement in educational decision-making.

It is still common for a substantial minority of students to leave school at 15 or 16 lacking marketable qualifications, ill equipped for and unable to find work and commanding a very limited range of social and personal competences. These are the students, inter alia, whom the selective system was said to have failed and for whom the comprehensive school was intended to provide new and challenging opportunities. It has, on the whole, not done so. Even the most successful systems experience a 5 per cent drop-out rate and admit to a 10-20 per cent rate of students with noticeable learning difficulties.

The mere promise of a new type of school organisation or the broadening or diversifying of the curriculum and introduction of novel ways of grouping children are not sufficient. To stir the imagination and enthusiasm of students who, in their lives outside school may, on the one hand, receive little or no educational stimulus or reinforcement and, on the other, be subject to numerous pressures and deprivations that actively work against the values and practices of schooling, calls for something more creative and adventurous than many schools offer. No doubt it is expecting too much of any public education system to find ways of guaranteeing satisfactory educational experiences for the whole population of modern mass society. Yet, it is just such a challenge that the common school since its inception has made its own. It is a proper question to raise as to whether the ambition needs to be scaled down or a renewed commitment made to achieving it.

Amid the insecurity of modern society it is encouraging that the commitment of many thoughtful, experienced and practical educators to the fundamental and universalist educative mission of the comprehensive school remains unabated. The ends are not in dispute. What remains problematic is how educators can, with public and political support, provide the means for a fuller expression of its values for all than has been achieved thus far. What this requires is that, in the next stage of development or reconstruction, the closest possible attention be given to the learners in the schools. It is encouraging that in some reform projects, such as the introduction of the American middle school, this has been the principal motif. In relating the social goals and values of comprehensive schools to the individual and group experience of learning and teaching, it may well prove necessary to abandon many of our present institutional practices and some of the assumptions which have come to form the sloganistic base of the comprehensive school.

The French idea of la vie scolaire has been one attempt to break through some of the institutional boundaries, as is the American notion of "transescence" which draws attention to the student moving from childhood into adolescence as the centre of the educational process. Systematic recognition of the needs of students with learning difficulties and the provision of specialist facilities and teachers expert in learning problems represent other attempts to introduce differentiation closely related to each student as a person with distinctive needs. So far from there being any inconsistency between these concerns and the earlier political and economic motives for common secondary education for all, the economic and social prospects of young people in an age of shrinking opportunities for youth employment only serve to highlight the emerging challenge in lower secondary schooling.

II

DENMARK

by

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INTRODUCTION

During a visit to a country area we met a local school director who evidently found us unduly prone to look for problems since he uttered the dictum: "Problems arise from negative attitudes; they grow smaller if you leave them alone." That sentence sums up in a nutshell the conflict-avoiding, pragmatic Danish style of conduct. Not all problems can be avoided but when one becomes evident the Danes do not make a fuss or announce a crisis but see it as a basis for discussion among the various and carefully balanced partners in education.

It would be understandable, then, if the Danes were to regard as suspect a report that appears to raise problems. So we had better make it clear from the outset that we have deliberately not addressed Danish problems _in_ but rather problems related _to_ lower secondary education, the intention being to highlight the cross-cultural character of our review. For, besides serving the interests of Denmark, we hope that our analysis and findings will be relevant to issues and problems currently facing other OECD countries.

Danish educationists in central and local positions of authority will argue that local and school autonomy combined with parental participation is the main key, if not the key, to an understanding of how the Danish education system operates. Decentralisation of power ensures that the system responds to many recurrent and changing needs with silent efficiency. Little by little, and implicitly rather than explicitly, local innovations permeate the system. Sceptics might argue that decentralisation conceals fundamental ideological differences that would quickly surface and arouse conflict if decision-making and control were vested in central government. There is perhaps some truth in this, but we must say that Danes throughout the country appear to share common educational values and aspirations to a remarkable degree.

Educational legislation is passed by parliament either unanimously or with minimal dissent. Laws are deliberately framed in general terms so as to leave the local authorities and the schools great freedom in implementing them. Moreover, laws are enacted to reflect what is already happening rather than to lay down fresh foundations.

Danes distrust intricate systems and abstract discussions. To grand theories they prefer to look for a working solution to each problem here and now without seeking uniformity at all costs. For this reason it is not easy to have a coherent view of the actual situation and the outside observer is well advised, therefore, to avoid hasty judgements.

It would not suffice for our purpose, however, simply to appraise lower secondary education provision in Denmark's own terms. Each education system constitutes part of a wider economic and social framework and has been influenced at least to some extent by other education systems as well as by universal philosophising about educational ends and means. For this reason we propose to discuss the specific case of Denmark in the light of three criteria prominent in the cross-cultural evolution of the common or comprehensive lower secondary school.

FRAMEWORK OF CRITERIA

The comprehensive lower secondary school in OECD countries was discussed extensively in a recent OECD report (1). We do not wish to repeat the same ideas and arguments but would simply summarise its main theme because of its relevance to our particular mission. One of the main reasons for establishing comprehensive schools has been to enhance the educational chances of all young people whatever their socio-economic background or personal handicaps. The intention was that all young people in the age group should as far as possible share a common educational experience, which in practice meant that they should have the opportunity to pursue a curriculum previously confined to a select minority and to defer making choices about their future academic or working careers as long as possible. There should be minimum differentiation in the kind of schooling experienced and therefore a core curriculum and common leaving examinations.

There are three essential criteria to be applied to any comprehensive school that can be expressed in terms of six "critical Cs": Career Choice; Classroom Context; Curriculum Content. We shall discuss each of these in turn.

Career choice

In most OECD countries selective secondary schools used to exist in parallel with the upper forms of the elementary school. Transfer to the secondary school took place at the age of eleven or twelve and was highly influenced by social background, which in turn had significant consequences for subsequent selection into the upper secondary school and higher education. Thus, "One of the main reasons for establishing comprehensive schools has been to enhance the educational chances of all young people whatever their socio-economic background or personal handicaps". The proposed common educational experience means that every young person "should have the opportunity to pursue a curriculum previously confined to a select minority and to defer making choices about their future academic or working careers as long as possible". The idea of providing a common educational experience for all is concerned with the organisation of the comprehensive school, especially its relation to the surrounding society in terms of transition to work or further education at the upper secondary level.

Classroom context

The second criterion is concerned with the internal organisation of each school, especially the existence of rules or conventions for streaming, setting or mixed ability grouping which may hold back or otherwise exert an undue influence on a student's progress in relation to his or her capabilities and interests. This dimension contains both a social and cognitive component. Mixed ability grouping is most often held to be favourable from a social point of view, especially by those who strongly emphasize the necessity for pupils to share the same experiences in all subjects with peers of all types of background and covering the whole range of ability. Even if there is evidence that mixed ability teaching may be as effective as ability grouping, in terms of cognitive outcomes it imposes at the level of junior secondary schooling great demands on teaching skills and material resources and has implications for such factors as the size of class and school. Consequently, the internal organisation of the school in terms of grouping arrangements cannot be used as the sole indicator of a good comprehensive school. It is also necessary to take into account the general conditions under which teaching takes place and available support resources of different kinds are being used.

Curriculum content

The criterion of curriculum content concerns, first of all, the total balance of the curriculum in relation to the general goals of the compulsory school for all. This applies not only to those who wish to continue to upper secondary education of an academic or university preparatory type but also to those who desire or need to finish school directly or to take a vocational training programme. General education in all its aspects is brought into focus including preparation for citizenship and leisure, the balance between basic skills, humanities and science as well as aesthetic education and training and practical skills.

In principle, the problem of curriculum balance can be discussed entirely in terms of a set of compulsory subjects. The curriculum can also contain electives (or options) so that the pupils can make a choice within certain restrictions as to combinations of subjects and the allocation of his or her time. Here a common problem, as in many countries, is the degree to which the optional subjects allow different pupils to choose subjects which give them an opportunity to develop themselves in areas for which they have a special talent or strong interest. Moreover, the rules for access to academic upper secondary education may put specific restrictions on those pupils whose choices are directed towards such lines of study or at least want to keep that door open as long as possible. Within subject areas there may also be optional courses or at least optional examinations or examination levels, even if all pupils have followed the same basic course supplemented by additional enrichment courses to a greater or lesser extent.

With regard to the specific goals of secondary education offered within a comprehensive school system, special attention should be directed towards three features in the curriculum: i) The degree to which there is sufficient variation in the course demands to allow individual pupils along the whole range of abilities and interests to profit from the instruction and to make progress; ii) The opportunities for the pupils to exert an influence on conditions in the school, on curriculum planning and on the monitoring of their own work; iii) The extent to which upper secondary education exerts an unduly restrictive influence on actual choices or on course content at the lower secondary level.

Other criteria

In addition to the foregoing criteria, there are, of course, many other factors which can exert a beneficial influence in any type of school, whether directly or indirectly. These include the leadership style and competence of school directors, headteachers and principal teachers, the quality of teacher training, the personalities and working conditions of the teachers, parental influence and so on.

Neither does it seem possible to maintain that a decentralised decision-making system eo ipso is more in line with the idea of a comprehensive school, nor that a certain type of examination or assessment is better suited to serve the purposes of a comprehensive lower secondary education. All depends upon the extent to which administrative decision-making and individual assessment assume a form adapted to the specific goals and values of comprehensive schooling.

For similar reasons we do not propose to advocate specific methods of instruction as generally more suitable for comprehensive lower secondary school than for other schools. Here, other factors are decisive such as the type of subject, the methods of grouping pupils and their characteristics and the competence of the teachers. This applies both to the balance between laboratory work and class demonstrations in science and to problems about the use of group work, audiovisual aids and so on. The problems of subject orientation versus integrated studies and of interest areas or project work seem in principle also to belong to this category of factors, even though one could argue that the need for special attention to the average, not specifically academic-oriented, pupils makes it reasonable to devote more time to problem-oriented and integrated educational experiences of various kinds. Nevertheless, as reviewers, we are reluctant to make any type of generalised policy statements in methodological matters in much the same way as we do not think it is appropriate for education authorities of any type to issue binding recommendations which might interfere with the teacher's professional judgement.

FACTORS FAVOURING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE COMMON SCHOOL IN DENMARK

Until the early sixties only the first five years of schooling provided a common experience for all children. "After this period there was in most schools a streaming in the 6th and 7th forms -- a stream leading to upper secondary education, and a general stream. In the stream leading to upper secondary education there was a triennial réal department as a kind of superstructure, and this department became very popular, and the pupils from the general stream could at their own option continue in the 8th and 9th forms -- and after some years an optional 10th year was added" (2, p. 26) (see Figure 1).

The selective system was transformed into a non-selective system in four stages :

i) 1958-1970 -- gradual deferment of streaming from the end of the 5th year until the end of the 7th year;

ii) by 1975 -- completion of the merging of the two selective streams in the 6th and 7th years into one stream;

iii) 1972 -- 9 years of schooling made compulsory ;

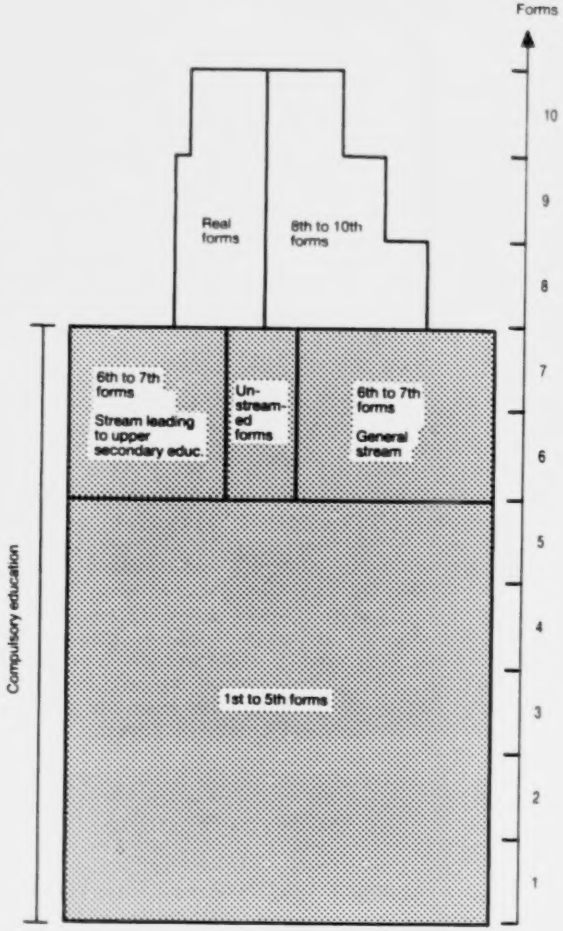
iv) 1972 -- enactment of the Primary and Lower Secondary Act permitted some options in a few subjects in the 8th and 9th years.

Three main reasons may be adduced for this rapid transition from one system to another. First, there was a general feeling that selection at the end of the fifth year, which was determined by the results of a test in Danish and arithmetic, was too premature to ensure an accurate assessment of each pupil's aptitudes and potentiality. Second, the ideal of equality of educational opportunity had come to be widely accepted and this predicated offering an adequate secondary education to all children. Third, it was necessary to find ways and means of offering to young people in rural areas the same access to secondary education as that available in urban areas.

It is one thing, however, to present three reasons of such generality, which might apply to any number of countries, and quite another to explain why they had such a strong and immediate impact on Denmark. We believe that five factors account for the establishment of the common lower secondary school with such apparently remarkable ease.

First, it is important to note that Denmark has a very long public schooling tradition. Compulsory education up to the age of 14 was instituted in 1814 and the value of a high level of education for all, provided in a democratic setting, has been recognised ever since. Compulsory education, however, does not necessitate compulsory schooling. In a recent pamphlet the

Figure 1


Forms
10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
Real forms
8th to 10th forms
6th to 7th forms
Stream leading to upper secondary educ.
Un-streamed forms
6th to 7th forms
General stream
1st to 5th forms
Compulsory education

Danish Ministry of Education explains the nuance in the following way:

> "Compulsory education, however, did not mean compulsory schooling. It means that people were free to educate their children in whatever way they saw fit as long as the children received instruction in the principal school subjects and that this instruction was of a standard comparable to that given in municipal schools"(3).

This principle is still fundamental to the right to establish free or private schools, which will be discussed below.

Second, we must emphasize the positive role of parents in the education of their children. This is reflected in the flexible starting age of five and a half to seven for compulsory schooling, the limited development of organized pre-schooling and, as we shall describe at some length, the important part played by parents in the life of the schools. The school acts as the delegate of and in the name of the family.

Third, the system is libertarian and permits a high degree of choice. There exist alternative schools covering a wide range of ideologies and educational approaches.

Fourth, teachers enjoy a high degree of individual and group autonomy. This could encourage the development of entrenched attitudes. In fact, teachers play a seminal role in educational reform.

Fifth, the folkeskole embraces the whole primary-lower secondary cycle (compulsory schooling) and is served by a teaching force that has experienced a common training.

Finally, we believe that the Danish approach to educational reform is of critical significance. This approach is consciously evolutionary and pragmatic. Speed of change is neither expected nor encouraged. Uniformity is not a specific goal. Each school district and, indeed, each school adapts to most new ideas and pressures in its own good time. In this way political conflict and pedagogical controversies are largely avoided. What is remarkable, nevertheless, is the existence of a broad consensus about the objectives of lower secondary schooling and more or less parallel developments from district to district. Thus, the common school has been introduced and widely established more rapidly and smoothly than in many a country with a highly centralised education system and coercive powers.

CAREER CHOICE

Alternative routes at and after the lower secondary level

Figure 2 shows the main structure of the Danish school system, following the post-1958 reforms, as presented by the Danish Ministry (3). The division of the common school into public and private sectors has been introduced by us. Pupils can proceed to the different forms of upper secondary education either after grade 9 or grade 10. The gymnasium is the direct and traditional route to higher education, but at this level

"HF-courses", intended for older students, represent an alternative track leading to the Higher Preparatory Examination.

The great majority of pupils who enter the gymnasium, do so:

> On the basis of a statement issued by the earlier school to the effect that they are "qualified" or "perhaps qualified" for studies at that level. Depending on their choice of line, a further requirement is that pupils have passed the Leaving Examination of the folkeskole in certain subjects with a satisfactory result and have followed at least the basic course in certain other subjects (4).

It should be added that pupils whose applications from grade 9 are rejected may register an appeal and then be required to pass an entrance examination set by the receiving upper secondary school. Another alternative is to sit for the Advanced Level Examination at the end of grade 10, a grade recently used to give late bloomers an opportunity to mature.

One could perhaps argue that the ordinary route to the gymnasium through the qualification statements rests both upon a not insignificant element of subjectivity and great trust in teachers to make valid and impartial assessments without favouring pupils from more privileged social backgrounds. The right to appeal and entrance through the 10th grade door are aimed at rectifying mistakes in these respects, thus providing pupils and parents with a "safety valve". Again, it might be argued that the 10th year alternative favours those who can afford financially to spend an extra year before matriculation, but in a time of high youth unemployment like the present one, that argument becomes less strong than at others as an increasing percentage of the age group stays on.

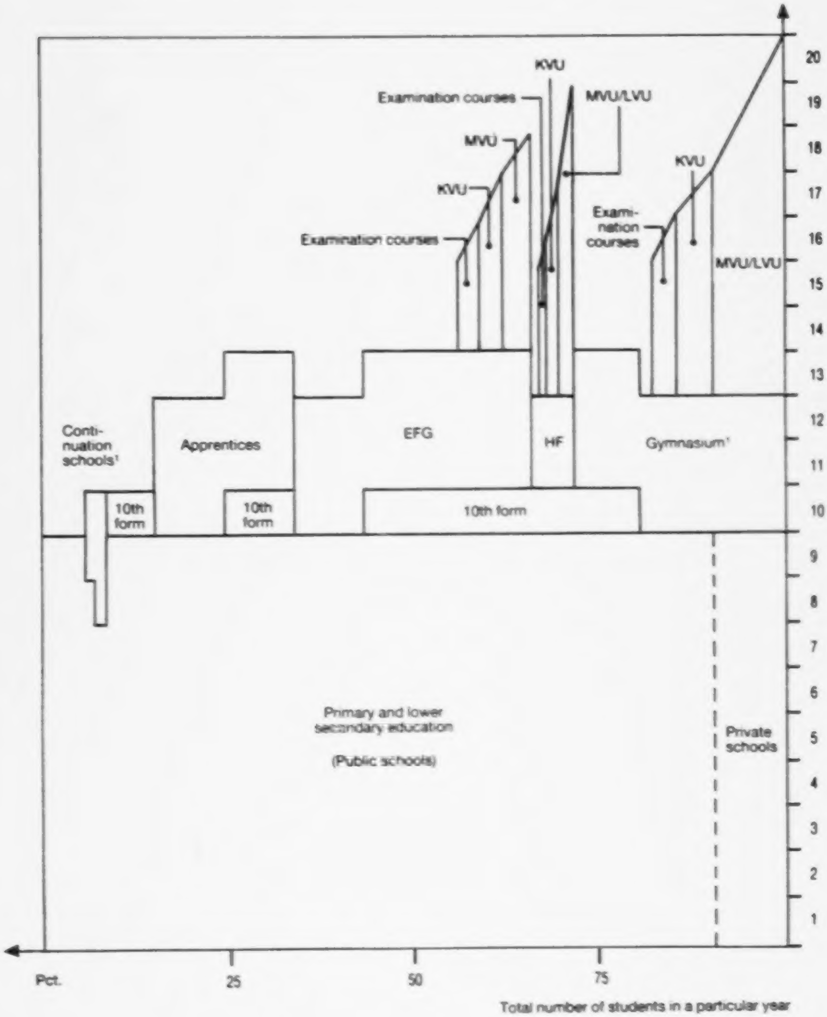
The extent to which there is specific social bias at entry to the gymnasium over and above the individual performance differences in well-controlled examinations is difficult to estimate. It may be that there is a social-class bias in the selection of options in the 8th and 9th grades and, as we shall see, this selection has important consequences for entry to the gymnasium. All we can do is to point to the risk that social bias may occur while emphasizing the corrective mechanisms that have been so ingeniously incorporated into the system.

Another "safety valve" is the continuation school (efterskole), a residential institution originally aimed mainly at those from rural areas who wanted to improve the knowledge they had acquired in the folkeskole at an age when they were too young to enter the Folk High Schools. The continuation schools may now also be chosen by young people who do not feel at ease in the general school system. The Ministry describes these schools as follows:

> Continuation schools belong to the group of the so-called "free schools" -- i.e. they are free to make their own curricula without interference from the state. As regards most schools, the elaboration of curricula is based on certain political, religious or pedagogical ideas -- a fact that is very much taken into consideration when pupils leave the folkeskole to enter a continuation school.
>
> A number of continuation schools have been established where practical work is of great importance. Students spend about half of their time

Figure 2

THE EDUCATIONAL PYRAMID
Survey of the structure and distribution of pupils in the Danish education system, 1980/81


KVU
Examination courses
MVU/LVU
MVU
KVU
Examination courses
KVU
Exami-nation courses
MVU/LVU
Conti-nuation schools¹
Apprentices
EFG
HF
Gymnasium¹
10th form
10th form
10th form
Primary and lower secondary education
(Public schools)
Private schools
20
19
18
17
16
15
14
13
12
11
10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
Pct.
25
50
75
Total number of students in a particular year

1. It is to be noted that all continuation schools and certain upper secondary schools (gymnasia) are private.

Notes: EFG : Basic vocational education
HF : Higher preparatory examination
KVU : Short cycle higher education
MVU : Medium cycle higher education
LVU : Long cycle higher education.

Source: Economic-Statistical Division.

> on theoretical studies and the other half on practical work such as creative art, gardening, kitchen work, operation of a printing press, salvage or recycling of waste products, etc. (5).

Although free to design their own curricula, the continuation schools prepare for examinations set by the State.

There are almost one hundred efterskoler, attended in 1981/82 by some 12 000 pupils. A school visited by us fully embodied the U90 (6) philosophy on the curriculum: there was a careful balance between the academic, the practical and the aesthetic, all three elements being compulsory. The school is run on highly democratic and informal lines. Teachers do not grade pupils' work, for they believe that to do so would damage pupils' self-esteem and confidence. However, pupils may enter for the leaving examinations if they wish. The pupils with whom we spoke seemed highly satisfied with their school. Here, as in many continuation schools, pupils were disproportionately of middle-class origins. Since continuation schools are free to design their curriculum without interference from the State, they vary considerably in their priorities, but many, like the one we visited, place a strong emphasis on practical work and aesthetic subjects. The continuation schools, then, do not merely act as an alternative for pupils and parents who are dissatisfied with the folkeskole, but also serve to a certain extent as centres for curricular and pedagogic innovation, in addition to the official experimental schools. The existence of these schools testifies to the remarkable flexibility of the Danish school system in making itself highly responsive to the needs and wishes of its clients. One consequence, however, is to drain the folkeskole of some of their more restless students and thus reduce pressure for curricular or pedagogic reform within the main stream system. We noted that the continuation schools tended to have very weak links with the folkeskole; their isolation is more than geographical. As far as we can judge there are few mechanisms by which developments in the continuation schools can be fed into the folkeskole.

Still another alternative in the higher grades, especially in practical subjects, is provided by the municipal youth schools, which often cooperate closely with the folkeskole.

The leaving examinations

Optional leaving examinations can be taken at two levels: an ordinary Leaving Examination (LE) and an Advanced Leaving Examination (ALE). The latter can only be taken at the end of the 10th form and only in theoretical subjects. The LE can be taken in forms 9 and 10 in more subjects than the ALE, among them being four practical subjects including Home Economics and typewriting, which also can be taken at the end of the 8th form. The double examination system is a legacy of the merging of the old lower secondary school with the extended elementary school. As a political compromise the ALE was intended to match the standards of the last grade of the former réal school.

The examination situation has changed somewhat in recent years as a result of the emergence of the youth employment problem and the corresponding tendency for an increased number of youth to take the 10th optional year. We heard several complaints about the great amount of time taken away from ordinary school work in grade 9 by examination requirements when in fact most students continue in school for another year. Another problem is connected with the low enrolment in practical subjects at the lower secondary level, owing to the "academization" of career choices through a desire to keep the door open to the gymnasium as long as possible. Still another problem has its origin in the student's right to decide in how many and what subjects he or she wants to be examined and the degree to which employers look for students with a certain number of A's in academic subjects as an indicator of general capacity rather than for the whole profile of the student's school marks.

Even though we had not the time to go into the details of the marking system, it struck us that the 13 step scale (so-called but really a ten step scale, viz. 13-11-10-9-8-7-6-5-3-0) of a norm-referenced type might lead to difficulties in the long run, because the reference groups are changing as a consequence of longer schooling and new preferences. We also encountered opposition to the scale among some of the teachers and other educators whom we met.

CLASSROOM CONTEXT

Individualisation and integrated special education

Individualised learning as a general principle can be brought about in different ways. Both ability grouping and crypto-streaming are traditionally common but have drawbacks due to the great risks of permanency irrespective of changes in the progress and needs of individual pupils. Other approaches are mixed-ability grouping and individualisation within the heterogeneous class, sometimes combined with flexible grouping, i.e. the use of subgroups for short spells of class time. For pupils with handicaps or special learning difficulties, this corresponds to an integrated special education as compared with permanent special classes.

In Denmark the folkeskole retains mixed-ability classes in all subjects up to grade 7. The introduction of German as the second foreign language in grade 7 marks the beginning of a differentiated course content. This is followed by two alternative course levels in Mathematics, English and German from grade 8 and in Physics/Chemistry from grade 9, leading to the different examination levels (LE, ALE) discussed above. The division of the electives into course levels is, however, no longer compulsory and mixed-ability grouping and undivided courses are on the increase. This situation has been brought about by two separate but converging factors.

The first is a growing awareness of the benefits that accrue in terms of flexibility and adaptability to pupils' needs and rates of progress. The evidence provided by experiments in the Gladsaxe school district has paved the way but also shown the necessary preconditions which should be met in order to maintain standards at a high level.

The second factor is the increased demand from pupils and their parents for advanced level courses. The consequence of this is a lower number of pupils in the basic courses and higher numbers in the advanced ones. Thus, the teaching burden is becoming onerous in classes following advanced courses. If, instead, an undivided course is offered to a mixed-ability class, additional teacher time may be exceptionally allowed for subgroups of students and a more flexible use of teacher time and other resources in general. This system rests upon the basic rule that the transition to mixed-ability grouping and undivided courses in electives should not be accompanied by any loss of total resources for teaching. In other subjects a scale is applied that allows increasing teacher time with increasing class size.

Finally, the local communities may use extra teacher resources above the norms recommended by the Ministry of Education. In the school statistics there is an index which gives the difference in per cent of the recommended teaching time per pupil. The greater the difference, the more extra resources are expended by the community.

A general picture of the regional differences at the county level is given in Table 1. It shows substantial variations between counties in each respect. Special classes for handicapped children are more common in the capital than elsewhere, as are extra resources. The national mean for special classes is, however, quite low.

As regards undivided classes, it should first be observed that the figures are taken from the same school year. Since the proportion of undivided classes is reported to increase each year, the difference between the two subjects recorded is mainly a consequence of the fact that the decision about Mathematics was taken in grade 8 of the preceding year. For 1982/83 a preliminary figure of about 33 per cent was mentioned. Here the greatest variation seems to exist between counties in each group, even though the highest figures seem to be found in the counties surrounding Copenhagen.

Both special classes and extra resources are most common in Copenhagen, Frederiksberg and Gentofte, and partly also Lyngby (see Table 2) where most of the private schools happen to be found. On the other hand, undivided classes are most often found in suburban areas like the innovation centre in Gladsaxe. It should be observed that the outer suburban area contains the maximum possible range.

In total, the great local freedom discussed above results in a quite considerable variation not only in the proportion of private schools but also in the extent to which extra resources are spent on education and various forms of integrated teaching are practised. Even though the basic content is expected to be the same, the social environment of the pupils varies to a great extent. When one considers the positive correlation between the frequencies for private schools and special classes within the public schools -- which in turn probably goes back to the special difficulties connected with living conditions in big cities and metropolitan areas -- one cannot arrive at any other conclusion than that the Danish school is not as comprehensive from a social point of view as might be expected, not even when one takes into account the differences in living conditions between regions and local areas. Within some of these areas, moreover, factors contributing to something like a further polarisation of these differences in the micro-environment provided by the school are apparently operating.

Table 1

SOME INDICES OF CLASSROOM CONTEXT BY GROUPS OF REGIONS
(range between regions in each group)

Groups of regions	a) Special classes % of pupils		a) Extra Resources % difference	b) Undivided classes % of pupils	
				English 8	Math 9
Capital area	2	3.9-5.8	18-20	0-34	11-26
Capital's outer ring	3	1.0-2.3	11-14	24-48	16-48
Middle Denmark	5	1.3-2.0	8-15	13-30	8-24
Periphery	6	0.9-1.4	8-14	0-19	0-13
Total	16	1.7	11.7	24.6	18.9

a) 1982/83.
b) 1981/82.

The extent to which one regards these limitations in the practice of comprehensive schooling as a drawback depends, of course, upon one's own value system. With the national means in focus, the tendencies described here imply that about 10 per cent of the student population get their education outside the common public school as a social environment (8 per cent in private schools + 2 per cent in special classes). In certain parts of the large metropolitan area of Copenhagen the same tendency is exaggerated to 20-30 per cent. But this also means that the proportion of pupils outside the common social environment in the public comprehensive school is quite low in a great number of more peripheral countryside districts, where, on the other hand, fewer extra resources are provided for the schools, and the teaching in the electives still generally takes place in divided courses. It should also be added that truancy generally seems to be low even at the transition phase between the levels of elementary and lower secondary education.

A comprehensive school system is expected to contribute to an equalisation of career choices, at least in the long run. As in a number of other countries, there are in Denmark only few indications of a secular change in that respect, except for the fact that the decisive stage of selection to secondary and higher education has been deferred and supplemented by alternative routes.

The Danish evidence is derived primarily from the youth follow-up study reported by Erik Jorgen Hansen of the Danish Institute for Social Research (*Socialforskningsinstitutet*). We must stress that reform measures need time to take effect and that this study was carried out on an early cohort. The more important it is, therefore, that replication studies should be commissioned (see the section below on *Research and Development*. The recent decision to authorise guidance specialists to monitor students' careers after they have left school, with special regard to so-called risk groups, is timely and, in our view, should be given continued attention and support.

Table 2

SOME INDICES OF CLASSROOM CONTEXT BY LOCAL COMMUNITIES WITHIN THE COPENHAGEN METROPOLITAN AREA

Local community	Private schools % (Table 4)	Public schools		
		Special classes %	Extra resources % difference	Undivided classes in English 8
Copenhagen	16.9	5.8	18.3	33.8
Frederiksberg	22.5	3.9	19.9	0
Northern suburbs				
Gentofte	27.8	2.9	17.6	26.7
Lyngby-Tarbaek	18.6	1.8	20.9	24.3
Sollerod	20.5	1.2	14.1	0
Gladsaxe	15.0	1.6	15.3	90.3
Other inner suburbs	1.9	1.5	15.9	47.9(a)
Other outer suburbs	5.7	2.8	10.2	51.2(b)
National mean (Table 1)	8.1	1.7	11.7	24.6

a) Range 11.4-74.3.

b) Range 0-100(!) Those amounting to 100 per cent are Brondby and Albertslund. Brondby has also a low proportion (0.7 per cent) of students in special classes, though 11.6 per cent receive special education of one kind or another.

THE CURRICULUM

In Denmark, as in other OECD countries, during the last two years of compulsory schooling there are important changes in the structure and content of the curriculum: some subjects which are compulsory in the early years now become optional subjects; and some new subjects are introduced as options for the first time. Thus, there are eight compulsory subjects in the 8th and 9th forms: Danish, Arithmetic/Mathematics, History, Physical Education, Christian Studies, English, Physics/Chemistry and Contemporary Studies. German (7), Biology and Geography are the optional subjects as are the aesthetic/creative subjects (art, music, etc.) and the practical/technical subjects (woodwork, needlework, home economics, typing, electronics).

There are many arguments in favour of a degree of pupil choice in the last years of compulsory education. Adolescent pupils are mature enough to make sensible choices; pupils need some degree of specialisation at this stage in the light of their abilities and aspirations: if pupils are allowed to choose subjects they prefer, and also to abandon those subjects they dislike or in which they show little talent, then pupil motivation is increased; pupils must prepare for the next stage of their life -- upper secondary schooling, vocational courses in the labour market -- and the curriculum must reflect the needs for these different kinds of transition from compulsory education.

On the other hand, it can be argued that the introduction of many optional subjects incurs a considerable cost: curricular breadth is sacrificed to specialisation. Pupils are still in the common school, but after the 8th form they are no longer following a common curriculum. They may be differentiated not only by ability, or level of difficulty in a subject, but also by the curriculum content they elect from among the options. The choices pupils make do more than prepare them for the next stage of life; they constrain and channel future career possibilities. In Denmark, as in other countries, the compulsory subjects for pupils between the ages of 14 and 16 years tend to be those which constituted the academic curriculum once followed by the minority of pupils, who in past years continued with their education beyond the statutory leaving age. In other words, whilst the length of compulsory schooling has increased, the compulsory subjects for older pupils reflect the interests and influence of upper secondary education and higher education. Compulsory subjects tend to be seen as more important than optional subjects: why, otherwise, should some subjects be compulsory and others optional? The (optional) aesthetic and practical/technical subjects, which (it is often said) are more attractive to the "less academic" pupils, are thus seen as less important and less prestigious.

The curriculum in the last two years of compulsory schooling may thus differentiate pupils into two broad types: those who opt for "academic" subjects (Biology, Languages, History and Geography) and those who opt for the aesthetic and practical/technical subjects. There exists, on this view, a hidden form of selection within the last two years of the common school. Although in principle pupils choose the next stage of their education at the end of the 9th form, in practice this choice has been heavily constrained by the option choices made two years earlier. Those who select the academic options and thereby facilitate entry to upper secondary education are disproportionately middle-class; those who select the aesthetic or practical/technical options are disproportionately from the working class and are much more likely to find themselves in what U90 classed as the residual group. On these grounds it can be argued that the optional system in the 8th and 9th forms represents a restriction on equality of opportunity.

At the same time it must be said that this criticism of the optional subjects in the last two years of compulsory schooling is less valid in Denmark than in some other countries. First, in Denmark it is the pupils and the parents who make the selection of options, not the teachers. Second, as we have already shown, within the Danish system there is provided an alternative to pursuing upper secondary education only in the gymnasium, namely the HF or Higher Preparatory Examination, which serves as another route to higher education. This is one of the "safety nets" which have been skilfully built into the Danish education system.

There is a second question concerning the optional subjects in the 8th and 9th forms. Is this option entirely compatible with the aim of the folkeskole (the Act of 1975) "to offer possibilities for the pupils to acquire knowledge, skills, working methods and forms of expression which will contribute to each individual pupil's all-round development"? (underlining added). There is no suggestion that this "all-round development" should terminate at the end of the 7th form. Are pupils in the 8th and 9th forms who seek to reduce to a minimum their study of aesthetic or practical/technical subjects receiving an "all-round development"?

Some sections of U90 are relevant to this discussion. The report argued that teaching in the folkeskole tends to be subject-centred, with the danger that the subjects become isolated from one another and the curriculum as a whole lacks coherence. Such problems of coherence become particularly acute when there exists a large number of options and pupils are following very different combinations of courses. When there is lack of curricular coherence, some pupils will experience the curriculum as fragmented. The report recommended an increase in team-teaching and multidisciplinary study (Chapter X.17). The report also noted the lack of application of knowledge: there is too sharp a division between intellectual and manual work. The authors of U90 make it clear that in their view all theoretical knowledge should be shown to have a practical application, and manual and practical work should be placed on an equal footing with bookish learning and theoretical work (Chapter VIII.14). They suggested not more practical subjects in the curriculum, but the introduction of more practical work into all subjects. Further, U90 proposed a strengthening of the aesthetic/creative aspects of the curriculum: a higher priority should be given to these subjects (Chapter X.II) (6).

The OECD had anticipated some possible developments in these matters: it will be recalled how important U90 was to the examiners involved in the national review of Denmark (published in 1980) (8). We were very surprised to be told, by almost everyone we asked, that "U90 is dead". Doubtless there are many and complex reasons for the disappearance of U90 from educational debate in Denmark, but the issues we have raised are still a matter for discussion, and in our view rightly so.

As we have noted already, the relation between the practical and the theoretical, and the place of aesthetic subjects, are in several OECD countries important topics in relation to the curriculum of the last two years of the common school. There are several reasons why reform along these lines in Denmark might be easier than in some other countries. First, the folkeskole teachers share a common training for both primary and lower secondary schooling. Moreover, most teachers teach the full age-range of pupils, from 1st to 9th forms. One might therefore expect among Danish teachers a less subject-centred approach and a more flexible attitude to team teaching and multidisciplinary courses than in those countries which create an institutional break between primary and lower secondary schooling and where many lower secondary school teachers are university graduates in a single subject. Second, in Denmark the teachers of any one subject are not in a hierarchical relationship to one another, whereas in some other countries teachers have a differentiated salary scale and each subject has a principal teacher or head of department. Third, there is very low mobility among the foleskole teachers and this tends to facilitate co-operation and collaboration between teachers.

Yet there are several factors which inhibit such curriculum change in Denmark. In the light of growing unemployment among young people, the leaving examinations have assumed a new importance for parents and pupils, and the examination is subject-based. As we have already observed the advanced leaving examination has in recent times assumed a particular importance, and the advanced course is provided only for the academic subjects, but not for the practical/technical or aesthetic subjects. The structure of the leaving examination, when combined with the perceived importance of the advanced courses, acts as a powerful constraint on teachers and severely weakens any pressure to multidisciplinarity or the production of a more balanced curriculum with equal prestige for the practical and aesthetic elements. Moreover, the most important development of multidisciplinary courses, Contemporary Studies, seems to have met with a very mixed reception from pupils, parents and teachers. Certainly this innovation does not appear to have been sufficiently successful to encourage further innovations of this type. It should also be said that in recent years one of the major priorities for teachers in the 8th and 9th forms has been mixed-ability teaching, in the light of the growing numbers of schools which decide not to stream pupils into two levels, a basic course and an advanced course, in Arithmetic/Mathematics, English, German and Physics/Chemistry.

It is one of the great strengths of the Danish system that the folkeskole is highly responsive to the wishes of parents and pupils and that important decisions are not placed exclusively in the hands of the teachers. The price to be paid for this is that it becomes very difficult to create greater breadth and balance in the curriculum of older pupils until the need for this is understood and actively sought by parents. Major curriculum reform, then, will be a relatively slow process in Denmark, since the speed of curriculum change is dictated by the parents rather than by the professionals. As far as we can judge, teachers are more in favour of greater breadth and balance and are more supportive of the U90 reforms than are the parents. If the teachers wish to make major curriculum changes, they must first persuade the parents. There is no inspectorate in Denmark and the head teacher is an administrator and manager rather than the person who shapes the educational and curricular philosophy of the school. In some other countries it is the inspectors and the head teachers who become the key change agents in curriculum reform, for they have both the formal power and the acknowledged authority to exercise such leadership -- but, of course, these countries deny to parents the power which makes the Danish system so distinctive and in so many ways so effective.

The creation of a broad and balanced curriculum for older pupils in lower secondary education is a difficult task in all countries. We can understand why in Denmark developments in this regard have been slower than in some places. But it must also be said that there is evidence that the folkeskole teachers are working more closely together than was true ten years ago. The production of greater breadth and balance in the curriculum may not be an immediate priority now, but the foundations for such development are perhaps being quietly laid among the teachers within the schools.

It seems to us unlikely that there will be any movement towards changing the balance of the curriculum in the 8th and 9th classes in the near future, since we cannot foresee a disturbance in the balance of forces which currently inhibit curricular reform. Some countries are responding to the problem by seeking to make aesthetic subjects a compulsory option, i.e. in the last two years of lower secondary education all pupils must choose at least one of four subjects: art, music, dance, drama. This is relatively easy in countries more centralised in educational matters than Denmark. Strictly speaking, such legislation on the role of the aesthetic subjects could be utterly contrary to the Danish tradition by which the Folketing legislates on educational matters only with a broad parliamentary majority, and making de jure what is already de facto in the schools. The Folketing responds largely to the schools and the parents: the schools (and local authorities) must respond to the parents. Until and unless the parents want the kind of curricular reform proposed by U90 and now regarded as so important by other countries, there will be little change.

To be more accurate, we should say that there will be little change in the folkeskole. But the change has already occurred in other parts of the education system. It is often said, in criticism, that the common school is too monolithic an institution. No such complaint could justly be made in Denmark. In most countries when a pupil does not fit into the common school, it is assumed that the problem is in the pupil and the rightness of the school is never placed in question. Whilst the Danes, like others, always try to help pupils adjust to the common school, they are also ready to accept that for a minority of pupils the folkeskole is an unsuitable school. More than most, the Danes, when confronted with the "non-conforming" pupil, are willing to locate the problem in the system, rather than the child. In consequence, they are, as we have seen, ready to provide alternatives to the folkeskole -- a variety of "safety" valves, so to speak -- which such pupils might attend.

TEACHER PREPARATION AND IN-SERVICE TRAINING

One of the main reasons for the low truancy rate and the general satisfaction with the learning environment inside the schools as now organised in the different parts of the country is no doubt the effectiveness of the teachers. By comparative international standards teachers in Denmark enjoy a high status both socially and economically. At least up to now, the large number of applications for teacher education has permitted a good quality intake. In addition, the long pre-service teaching periods, which offer a generic programme to all and specialisation in two main subjects, also contribute to a high standard of competence.

Moreover, the in-service programmes provided by the Danish Teachers College in Copenhagen and its many branches all over the country are extensive and varied with regard to both content and type. Nevertheless, in-service training problems remain. Thus, there seems to be an unsatisfied demand for courses among teachers, which in itself may be taken as another indicator of a high ambition level and continuing quest for higher professional standards. First, there is a demand of a cyclical type, as when a class teacher approaches the lower secondary level again after some years of concentrated teaching in lower forms. Second, the content of in-service training programmes does not change quickly enough in the most difficult areas as perceived by teachers, primarily in training for integrated special education as well as for individualised learning in undivided classes. Another structural problem lies in the much more limited range of programmes provided by some of the college branches, mainly in the geographically peripheral areas of Jutland and Bornholm.

We noted two further factors that enhance the status and independence of teachers. The first is that they are free to operate within very wide frames of reference. Neither curriculum guidelines nor pedagogical directives inhibit their power of action. "They can interpret course content in a broad sense and adopt virtually whatever teaching methods and styles that they wish".

The second factor is the teacher's freedom from hierarchical interference within his or her school. School principals are expected to administer but not to control the curriculum or lay down pedagogical rules for the teachers to obey. Innovations are assumed to emerge out of the enterprise of individual teachers or on the initiative of groups of teachers or whole school staffs. In the final section of our report we shall return to the significance of the teacher's personal autonomy when discussing the role of research and development in Denmark.

Continuity and the importance of the class teacher

Two features of Danish educational practice go far to account for the ready acceptance of the common school by teachers, pupils and parents and for the relative lack of organisational and curricular problems in the lower secondary school. The first is the fact that pupils are grouped together in the same class throughout the nine-year cycle. They are thus quite unaware of the possibility of differential treatment and relatively free from competitive envy. Indeed, we were told by one group of teachers that brighter pupils, according to the subject, sometimes help their lower-achieving peers; in so doing they feel no sense of superiority nor do those being helped feel any sense of inferiority. The attitudes of most pupils towards learning is cooperative rather than individualistic.

The second feature is the use of the same class teacher or no more than two class teachers, usually teachers of Danish and Maths, throughout the nine-year cycle. Class teachers come to know every aspect of a pupil's character and abilities. They also come to have a close acquaintance with the parents of the pupils in their care, a matter to which we shall turn in the next section. Apart from the cooperative spirit induced by the Danish teacher being responsible for the same groups of pupils for no fewer than nine years, there is a further advantage to the use of a class teacher, namely, that teachers, being required to be as competent to teach in the ninth as in the first year, are compelled by circumstance to keep their knowledge and skills up to date as each year poses a new challenge to curriculum content and teaching methods.

The danger is well known, of course, of exposing a class of children for several years to an incompetent teacher. Those whom we interviewed in Denmark claimed that the danger was more apparent than real since, in practice, future class teachers were carefully prepared during their initial training to undertake their special role. For our part we wonder whether the early performance of class teachers is in practice sufficiently monitored so as to ensure that an unsuitable appointee may be removed quickly from the class-teacher function.

PARENTS

The position of parents is made quite clear in the Act of 1975 where it is stated that the aims of the folkeskole are to be realised "in co-operation with parents". This belief in co-operation between home and school is taken with the utmost seriousness in Denmark: it is by no means mere rhetoric. Education is compulsory for children; school is not. If parents choose to send their children to the folkeskole, the school is in a very real sense acting on behalf of the parents. What happens in school, then, must be with the parents' consent and support. In Denmark parents exercise an unusual degree of influence and many parents guard that influence jealously, showing a healthy suspicion of those who might seek to encroach on it, whether they be teachers, local authorities, Ministry of Education officials or Ministers of Education. The commitment of parents is demonstrated by the size and influence of the National Association of Parents and School Boards, which has some 15 000 active parent members and which produces many publications and arranges courses for its members. It receives funding from the State and local authorities which covers the costs of membership fees according to the number of pupils.

Under the law parents have a number of powers, among which are:

- They must send their children to the folkeskole or arrange for some other form of elementary education;
- They may apply for admission of their children to some other school than in their local district;
- They may apply for the admission of their children to the first form one year before the child reaches the age of compulsory education, or may postpone it for one year;
- They may decide that their child should repeat a year;
- They may withdraw their child from religious education and assume responsibility for it themselves;
- They must be informed regularly about their child's progress in school;
- The selection of optional subjects, and the choice between the basic and advanced courses in the 8th and 9th forms, are made by the parents, after consultation with the child and the school authorities;
- Although the child makes the decision about entry to the examinations, the parents must be consulted by the child.

The law which establishes parents' rights is no more than a framework: in itself the law could not create the co-operation between home and the school on which the school system is premissed. The system does work; the teachers and parents do co-operate: the system is effective because of the high degree of trust which exists between the parties. In Denmark there is a very delicate balance of forces between the parents, the teachers and the authorities (local authorities, the Ministry, the Minister and the Folketing). The Danes are very aware that the system works and that it works because of the relations of trust. In consequence, all the parties are reluctant to disturb the balance of forces, for to do so might disrupt the effectiveness of a system in which all parties currently achieve a high level of satisfaction.

Parental rights are not limited to those outlined above. Fundamental to the power and position of the parents is the existence of the school board which consists of 5 to 7 parents who are elected by and from the persons who, at the time of the election, have custody of the children enrolled in the school. The Folketing sets the general aims of the folkeskole and the Minister sets the aims for particular subjects. But the school plan, which within the framework of the Act makes detailed decisions on the curriculum, the timetable, the numbers of lessons in each subject, and the options, is determined by the school board in association with the education committee of the local council. Six of the thirteen members of the local education committee are elected from among the members of the school (or youth school) boards. The head teacher, 2 teachers, 2 pupils and one member of the local council participate in the meetings of the school board, but they have no voting rights. The school board draws up the school rules and has important powers relating to the decision whether or not to divide courses into basic and advanced levels in the 8th and 9th forms. It is clear that, in comparison with many other countries, Danish parents possess an unusual degree of power in the school. To a foreign eye, unaccustomed to such prominence of parents in the school system, it might appear that the power of the professionals within the education system must thereby be very weak and their status low. This is not so. Because, we must repeat, there is a powerful spirit of co-operation and consultation between parents, professionals and politicians, the system works with remarkable smoothness and lack of conflict.

Engagement in the life of the schools, in Denmark, as elsewhere, is greater among educated parents than among those with limited education. Sometimes as many as three-quarters of the parents vote in the election of the school board. At the other extreme, in the more deprived and disadvantaged areas of Copenhagen, where there are many immigrant families, it can prove difficult to persuade enough parents to constitute the school board. It is recognised that if the parents are passive, the balance of forces will be shifted. Yet even a low poll in the school board election is not in itself a clear indication of low parental satisfaction. It may be that parents are satisfied with the school and the previous school board. In general, we were struck by the high degree of satisfaction felt by most parents with regard to the folkeskole. It was often acknowledged that the school board members may not be fully representative of the parents as a whole, and the fact was conceded with regret rather than a reluctant complacency.

Parental satisfaction is probably also related to the Danish emphasis on the special role of the class teacher, a distinctive feature of the folkeskole to which we have already referred. The class teacher, who is often the teacher of Danish, has a general responsibility, both academic and social, for the pupils in the class. He or she remains the class teacher for a group of children throughout the period of compulsory education. Often teaching several subjects in the curriculum, he or she comes to know each pupil very well indeed. It is he or she who maintains links with the parents and, as the years pass, who often comes to know the parents well also. If the parent or the pupil has a problem, it is to the class teacher that either will normally turn. Every week one lesson is devoted to free class discussion (klassens time) in which problems can be discussed, class activities arranged, and some social education (e.g. road safety, sex education, health education, educational and vocational guidance, etc.) undertaken. It is perhaps significant that the new subject of Contemporary Studies (samtidsorienteering) is often most successful when taught by the class teacher. In short, the class teacher is a stable source of continuing care for, and knowledge about, the pupil and the readily accessible link between home and school.

In addition to all this, there are many other ways in which parents can be involved in the work and life of the school. Thus, many parents serve on school and municipal boards; the school board may arrange meetings for parents; the class teacher may see parents to discuss such potentially contentious matters as homework; in the upper forms pupils may also be involved in the meetings between parents and teachers; there may be meetings of parents and teachers for a whole form or year-group; there may informal parent/teacher co-operation.

In summary, parents in Denmark possess many formal powers with respect to the governance of the *folkeskole* and the law provides a framework for partnership between the home and the school, the parents and the professionals. But the success of the system hinges more on the spirit of co-operation and trust which guides the relations between the parents and the teachers. The *folkeskole* is an open system, which actively invites parental participation and involvement. Not all parents avail themselves of the opportunities thus provided, and the Danish authorities are aware of the need to strive still more for the greater involvement of parents in disadvantaged areas. Yet the visitor to Denmark is impressed by the virtual absence of critical voices of parents who feel excluded from the decision-making process. Most parents are satisfied most of the time concerning most issues. When they are not fully satisfied, or when there are issues in dispute, as currently about some features of the 8th and 9th forms, they have ample opportunities to present their case.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

As might be expected, it is not easy in Denmark to ascertain how new educational ideas are generated or how specific innovations in curriculum or teaching methods become widely adopted. There is comparatively little educational research in the universities or in other institutions. The Institute of Educational Research, which is relatively small, carries out valuable studies but is not expected to undertake investigations connected to particular reform strategies or to monitor the effects of particular reforms.

There has been, then, no systematic plan to commission research where findings might have influenced the evolution of the common lower secondary school, nor has any attempt been made systematically to monitor the effects of the structural and curricular changes recently instituted at that level. On the other hand, there is confidence in the Ministry of Education and at all levels that novel ideas and pedagogical innovations are constantly being tried and tested and that the successful ones are quickly adopted in most of the schools. The explanation for this seems to lie in the professional pride and zest for experiment of individual teachers. As we were informed: "The Danish teacher believes that he or she is doing research and forever trying something new". New ideas and methods are discussed at the school level by councils of teachers and fed into the curriculum of the teacher training colleges. The Royal Danish College consciously performs an innovative function through its domination of in-service training programmes. We also noted that any teacher or group of teachers who receives funds to conduct an experiment designed to bring about more effective learning must write up the findings and ensure that they are circulated throughout the schools.

We certainly gained the impression that there is no lack of experimentation in Danish schools and that the dissemination process is highly effective. Our only regret is that the Danish distaste for centralised control and any form of regimentation means that there is a lack of hard evidence by which to analyse the impact of the common lower secondary school within Denmark and, more significantly, within an international context.

The OECD examiners who recently carried out an overall review of Danish education were not sparing in their praise of the system but lamented the lack of good statistics. In the very short time since their review, there has been a marked improvement in data collection. The improvement is largely limited, however, to providing basic tables of indicators about enrolments, class size and costs by regions and local communities. Such tables evidently assist school boards to identify where they stand in relation to the national mean and to comparable regions or districts. What seems to be lacking is any systematic attempt to analyse statistical indications with respect to groups of regions and municipalities in terms of such factors as industrial production, social background and demography. We would suggest that even our own modest break-down of the official statistics reveals the potential returns to be gained from considering the apparently quite big variations within the country which are now hidden behind a national mean.

PRIVATE SCHOOLS

One of the challenges for us as international reviewers of lower secondary education with the emphasis on its comprehensive character is the political and social significance of the private school or what might be more accurately called the alternative school sector in Denmark. We have already pointed out that this sector is compatible with the fundamental principles of comprehensive schooling as far as the curriculum is concerned.

Social equity is another matter. We should keep in mind what has been emphasized by the Danish Ministry itself:

> The Danish Folkeskole is a district school for the pupils, who live in the district, irrespective of their abilities and aptitudes. Social differences between the schools do appear because of different population basis and different residential patterns (Our underlining).

The Danes themselves readily accept that the local school should reflect the social differentiation that arises from the stratification of living conditions in different areas. There seems, for example, to have been no debate about the need for any bussing system. This is quite understandable given the homogeneity of economic and demographic conditions, the generally high standard of living and, by international standards, the almost complete absence of slum areas or severe poverty.

The great majority of the Danes whom we met, whatever their political affiliations, made positive statements about the basic principles underlying the existence of the private schools. They often referred to the fact that these schools are attended by "only" 8 per cent of the pupil population. Even though many of them admitted that a distinct rise in relative numbers would be regarded as a societal problem, they also emphasized that such a development should be treated primarily as a challenge to the public school system to improve its effectiveness still more.

Bearing these factors in mind we prefer to base most of our discussion about private schools in Denmark on the premises put forward by the Danes themselves. At the end, however, we think that it behoves us to put forward an external interpretation.

It is important to note that for the most part parents choose private school for positive reasons, i.e. because such a school has a distinctive feature not provided by the folkeskole, rather than for the negative reason that they consider the folkeskole sub-standard in some respect. The Danish alternative schools attract their clients because of their distinctive philosophies, religious, pedagogical or ideological.

There are some 370 of these schools catering for some sixty thousand pupils or about 8-9 per cent of the pupil population. They include 100 réal-schools, 14 Lutherian mission schools, 3 Muslim schools, 20 Grundtvigian free schools, the 35 "little schools" which have many different ideologies including left wing/marxist, 24 Catholic schools, 16 Steiner schools, and 17 German minority schools in South Jutland. Most are smaller than the average folkeskole. All are entitled to receive state subsidies covering up to 85 per cent of their operational expenditure, and when a school is being established it can obtain loans on favourable terms. Annual fees are only about three thousand kroner, which means that most parents can afford to pay them if they so choose.

It is evident that the private schools are not perceived in Denmark as elite schools for the rich, conferring social and educational advantages on a minority. Most of the Grundtvigian schools, for example, are older than the public comprehensive schools, and some private schools serve as the public school in areas where the municipalities see no point in incurring the cost of setting up a new school. Because they are seen to meet parents' political, religious, pedagogical and philosophical commitments and preferences and are accessible to most families, the private schools command widespread public support. They are not considered to be divisive or a threat to the common school. Their existence reflects Danish tolerance and respect for the rights of the individual, on the one hand, and distrust of uniformity and central control, on the other. They embody, in short, the Danish conception of a pluralistic society.

There are few controls on their activities. An official, based at the Ministry of Education, supported by supervisors locally appointed, is responsible for ensuring that the standard of education is comparable to that of the folkeskole and that there are controls on the size of each school in relation to the number of forms; e.g. a school with forms 1 to 7 must have at least 28 pupils. It is broadly assumed that parents make better judges of the quality of education provided by the school than agents of the State. A system so strong in trust will inevitably be weak in formal control.

It seems to be almost universally agreed in Denmark that the present balance between the private schools and the folkeskoler is the most appropriate and that there is some kind of self-correcting mechanism which preserves the balance between the two sectors. A marked increase in the private sector would be seen by most as undesirable. Thus, if the demand for private schools were to increase suddenly, the folkeskole would respond by adapting itself in the light of the implied criticism and thus restore the balance by meeting the needs of the majority more fully.

The stability of the private sector and its support by the population appears to rest on several factors:

i) The primary responsibility for education lies with parents, not with professionals or the State;

ii) The Danes respect differences and accept alternatives to the common school;

iii) Parents who seek alternative forms of education in the private sector remain a clear minority;

iv) Parents choose the private sector for positive reasons rather than out of hostility to the folkeskole;

v) Educational views are not closely aligned with political views among most of the Danish population;

vi) There is a high state subsidy for alternative schools which can then charge low fees;

vii) There is a relatively low differential in Denmark between higher and lower family incomes.

The statistical evidence yields several indications of a somewhat more complicated picture than the one exposed above. First of all, the private schools have increased their enrolments in recent years. Since 1975/76 student numbers have gone up by 26.3 per cent, while the folkeskole has registered a loss of 8.1 per cent. At the same time, the total student population has also diminished by 6.0 per cent. Thus, the private schools at the junior secondary level have increased their share of the total school population from 6.2 to 8.1 per cent. The private schools are generally smaller in size than the public schools, while the number of students per class is only slightly so.

Here it should be noted that there is a number of small schools with mixed-age groups, of which the public ones mainly are found in rural areas. Moreover, and most important, the folkeskoler are also quite small (360 pupils) in absolute terms by international standards, especially given that they cater for the entire age range of 7 to 16.

A few observations are called for about the regional distribution of private schools. When the analysis is made by the 16 regional units, mainly counties, the following findings are made. The lowest proportion of private-school pupils is found in some of the peripheral counties (about 3 per cent) In the middle of Denmark the frequencies centre quite closely (7-11 per cent) around the national mean (8.1 per cent). The private schools are particularly common in Funen and western Zealand. But in the capital area they sometimes exceed 20 per cent of the student population.

Table 3

COMPARISON BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS WITH RESPECT TO SCHOOL SIZE AND CLASS SIZE
(Mean numbers of students)

Type of school	School size (a)		Class size (b)	
	Public	Private	Public	Private
All groups	52.5	60.8	12.4	11.0
One form per age group	382.0	256.1	18.3	17.6
Total	359.8	172.2	18.2	16.2

a) 1981/82. *Source*: *Statistik 1978-79 o 1981-82. Folkeskolen m.v.* Undervisningsministeriet. Økonomisk-statistisk kontor. July 1983.

b) 1982/83. *Source*: *Folkeskolen i de enhelte kommuner 1982-83*. Undervisningsministeriet. Den økonomisk statistiske konsulent.

A close look at the Copenhagen metropolitan area discloses considerable variations between central and suburban local communities. A special cluster is here shown by some living areas in the coastal and lake area north and north-west from Copenhagen, where the housing standard is quite high.

As is shown in Table 4, in one of these local communities the private schools enrol as many as 27 per cent of all students, and for a number of the selected areas the proportion is in the region of 15-25 per cent. One should, however, also note the quite low figures for the other inner suburban areas, which may indicate that a number of pupils go to private schools over local boundaries. Another observation concerns the size of schools, which increases considerably from the central and rich suburban areas towards the periphery of Greater Copenhagen.

The interpretation of the pattern shown in Table 4 is not easy since the political pattern also has to be kept in mind. In that respect some of the metropolitan areas with a quite high proportion of private schools has a non-Labour party majority such as Frederiksberg, Gentofte and Lyngby. But in other areas with many private schools there is a clear Labour majority, such as Copenhagen and Gladsaxe. Most of the other suburban areas also have a Labour majority. (When referring to majorities we have here taken the votes for the three biggest parties on either side in the 1981 parliamentary elections). Finally, when considering all Denmark and the votes at the county level compared with the size of the private-school sector, there is a positive rank-order correlation of a significant size between Labour majorities and private schools.

Table 4

PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE COPENHAGEN METROPOLITAN AREA.

Local community	Private school Pupils (%)	School size		Class size	
		Private	Public	Private	Public
Copenhagen	16.9	199(a)	437	17.2	20.8
Frederiksberg	22.5	201	449	20.0	19.0
Northern suburbs					
Gentofte	27.8		430	20.7	19.2
Lyngby-Tarbaek	18.6		412	17.7	17.6
Sollerod	20.5	233	469	17.5	19.1
Gladsaxe	15.0		512	16.8	19.4
Other inner suburbs	1.9		581	16.7	18.8
Other outer suburbs	5.7		662	17.1	19.3

a) The size of these schools ranges from 35 to 1 000.

Some interview data and other observations should also be cited. It is readily acknowledged that the parents who choose the private sector are disproportionately middle-class (9). During our visit we also found some indications of dissatisfaction with the folkeskole among middle-class parents. This focused on the controversial issue of unstreaming in the upper forms (8-9), parents fearing that in unstreamed classes their children would not be sufficiently well taught to achieve high standards in the leaving examinations which, in the light of growing unemployment among the young, have assumed greater significance than in the past. We cannot judge, of course, whether or not such fears are warranted. As far as we can tell, a few parents do choose private schools in order to segregate their children socially, especially in urban areas where a wide social mix within the folkeskole is more common.

We should also draw attention to the fact that the private schools were reported to have long waiting lists, especially in the Copenhagen metropolitan area, so that in spite of the decreasing age cohorts they did not seem to have any difficulties in filling their classrooms. Indeed, the actual enrolment figures may be an underestimation as indicators of the demand for private schools.

All in all, the observations we have made in this section point to the conclusion that, even though the preceding section's line of argument is still valid to a large extent, this does not prevent the system from being affected by a certain amount of social selectivity. Those who give high priority to the equitable purpose of comprehensive schools will find the Danish school subject to some internal tensions between that value and the ways in which the freedom to set up private schools is practised, and consequently, less comprehensive in that respect than others perceive it to be.

WHAT SUCCESS?

It should be clear from the preceding pages that there are great strengths in the Danish common school, notably in the quality of teacher training and teaching competence, parental commitment, the alternatives offered outside the regular system, and local autonomy. But we should recognise emerging problems related to the social aspects of comprehensive schooling mainly with respect to the private schools and in curricular matters to the academisation of instruction at the lower secondary level at the expense of the practical and aesthetic subjects.

We never really managed to persuade anyone, even at the highest level of government, to say much about priorities. We think this might have been because no one yet knew what the priorities were under a new administration. But we also think that there is something to the view that Danes simply do not think in terms of priorities, for the very concept tends to assume a centralised system, that is, a person or group in power who takes an overall view, determines priorities, and then sets about implementing them, and it is such a system which the Danes reject. Perhaps this is why U90 failed -- it postulated priorities, appeared to be threatening imminent centralisation and was thus rejected.

It is said that in Denmark the system's apparent weakness is its strength. The lack of centralisation and bureaucratisation makes the system responsive to its clients. But it might also be claimed that the system's strength is its weakness, that is, when a severe problem arises where opinions are divided, it is not clear how the system could adapt quickly since no authority has the responsibility or power to initiate action with any speed.

For example, youth unemployment is today generating problems in Denmark, not only in the 16-19 age sector, but also in the 8th and 9th forms in relation to the examinations and unstreaming. About 20 per cent of the age groups still leave school without an adequate training for life, though it is true that a great effort is being made to provide post-school learning opportunities. In response, Danish educationists seem to believe that the recession will go away and that life will then return to normal. It is as if they cannot contemplate the alternative for fear that the education system might be unable to respond to cataclysmic change: their system is designed for effective evolution, not revolution.

Again, we feel that the purpose of the examination at the end of compulsory school needs to be clarified. Is it simply a technical matter of lightening the examination burden on the school year or is there not a fundamental cleavage between partisans of academic selection from the 9th year and those who advocate the same studies and the same examinations for all? Finally, does not the freedom to choose options and the subjects in which to be examined imply for the least motivated and least supported by their parents the risk of taking the easiest way out to the detriment of their futures?

Despite these caveats we cannot but conclude that Denmark has been remarkably successful in introducing the common school at the lower secondary as well as the primary level with minimum conflict and surprising rapidity. The various actors in the school system -- teachers, pupils, parents and administrators -- are content. Teachers' representatives, while expressing familiar professional reservations, are generally satisfied. The parents' association is not disposed to complain. The great majority of schools function harmoniously and the pupils work well. The scope for school-based innovation and experiment rests unimpaired.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. *Compulsory Schooling in a Changing World*, OECD, Paris, 1983.
2. *U90 -- Danish Educational Planning and Policy in a Social Context at the end of the 20th Century*, Ministry of Education, 1978.
3. Ministry of Education 1983: *Education in Denmark. The Education System*, Copenhagen, p.5.
4. *Ibid*., p.27.
5. *Ibid*.
6. *U90*, *op.cit*..
7. German is chosen by 90 per cent of all pupils.
8. *Reviews of National Policies for Education: Denmark*, OECD, Paris, 1980.
9. We also must emphasize, however, that in Denmark the middle classes represent a substantial majority of the total population.

III

FRANCE

by

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THE SETTING

Educational sectors

We shall begin by citing a few elementary facts in order to place the collège unique within the whole school system and administrative framework.

Altogether nearly fourteen million children and young adults, out of a total population of fifty five million, are at present attending schools and universities. After many years of decline the birth rate showed a slight increase in 1984. Room for expansion exists, particularly at the upper secondary and post-secondary level, and total enrolments in education are bound to increase over the mid-term.

France is extremely proud of its pre-school provision and, indeed, the école maternelle has long enjoyed a worldwide reputation. Today there are few reservations about its role and functions. In 1982-83 there were 2 413 000 children aged from two to five years in attendance in classes averaging twenty-nine pupils. Teachers at this level experience the same training, apart from a few special subjects, and have the same status as primary school teachers. They are seldom criticised.

The primary cycle lasts five years from 6 to 11 and offers a common curriculum. The total number of enrolments (public and private) diminished from 4 915 400 in 1961-62 to 4 361 200 in 1982-83; the decline over the last five years has been about 500 000. Average class size was 22.5 in 1982-83, reflecting a perceptible decline since 1961-62. In the past, teachers at this level required only the baccalauréat, followed by professional training, and doubts are frequently expressed about the effectiveness of some of them. It is said, for example, that far too many with inadequate qualifications were recruited to teacher training colleges during the period of rapidly expanding pupil enrolments in the sixties and early seventies. Many pupils come to the end of the primary cycle one year or more behind in their studies and this obviously poses a redoubtable problem to the colleges that are the focus of our review: how are they to be brought up to the appropriate level for starting on the secondary curriculum? As in several OECD countries, there is in France a deepening conviction that great efforts are required in order to make the primary school more effective. A drastic reduction of repeater rates, in particular during the first years of primary education, is one of the main objectives to be attained in the short term.

We shall not dwell here on the public reputation and problems of lower secondary cycle, that is, les collèges uniques. It suffices to note that in 1982-83 there were 3 200 thousand students in 4 737 collèges, that the average class size was 23.1 and that the average collège contained 550 students. One in ten students repeated a year or more of instruction. Moreover, from the age of fourteen a number of pupils were to be found in parallel vocational courses.

Upper secondary education is divided into two main branches: the academic lycée and the technical and vocational lycées. The vocational lycées give professional education to pupils coming from the troisième and from the cinquième forms of the collèges. Enrolments in the two have increased by about 200 000 since 1981 and further increases are anticipated and thought desirable. Teachers at this level, like most teachers in the collèges, are subject specialists with a restricted training. Viewed from a comparative international perspective, the academic lycée may be regarded as traditional and in certain neighbourhoods elitist; the technical lycée (Lycée d'Enseignement Professionnel, LEP)is treated as a less favoured parallel institution. The national authorities recognise that restructuring at the upper secondary level, and particularly raising the status of the technical or vocational lycées, can only follow from major changes at the lower secondary level. Meanwhile, it has been proposed for 1985-86 to increase by twenty the number of baccalauréats preparing young people for direct entry into an occupation.

The public schools in France are zoned, parents being expected to send their children to the nearest institution. In practice, some parents contrive by one means or another to send their children to what they consider a more prestigious school outside the zone where they reside.

Other parents send their children to private schools, which account for about 18 per cent of the aggregate school population (37 800 classes in 1982-83); 95 per cent of these are considered Catholic. There are important discrepancies in their regional distribution, varying from over 40 per cent in the traditionaly strong Catholic regions to less than 10 per cent elsewhere. These private schools should not be confounded with those schools in certain OECD countries that recruit from upper-income groups, and determine their own curriculum. Recruitment is from all social classes, although a certain proportion of private schools can be characterised as elite establishments. In France the difference between "public" and "private" is essentially confined to governance and management. The private schools are heavily subsidised by the State through payment of teachers' salaries. Their pupils as a rule take public examinations.

Control, administration and financing

Control and administration of the education system takes place at three levels. At the top is the Ministry of National Education, wielding, historically, very large powers. The Ministry is responsible for the recruitment and employment of all school principals and most secondary teachers. It issues regulation determining the curriculum and timetables of schools. At its disposal are two inspectorates: one concerned with the curriculum and pedagogy; the other with administration and regulations.

At the regional level, the responsible authority is the *académie* under the direction of a recteur, nominated by the Minister. The *académies* have full executive responsibility for the schools and universities in their regions. They have particularly important tasks in the domains of determining school catchment areas, allocating funds to secondary schools and controlling examinations.

At the *département* level (county) executive responsibility rests with an *Inspecteur d'Académie* with special regard to financing and managing primary schools and to the recruitment and management of the primary teaching force.

The merits and weaknesses of French educational administration are as well known to those within the system as to external observers. It is commonly said to be the classic example of a centralised system but it also has powerful regional structures which are not reducible to subsidiary elements in a rigid hierarchy. The chief merit is that structures and relationships are clear-cut and administrators, teachers and all the other actors know where they stand. Among the weaknesses is the position of teachers. They are to all intents and purposes civil servants, a status that gives them security but also lessens their autonomy. There are other problems to do with the structure of the teaching profession which are discussed below.

In 1984 the budget of the Ministry of National Education was estimated at 163.3 billion francs or 18 per cent of the national budget. This was second in amount to the defence budget. Expenditure has increased significantly since 1981. For instance, many more teachers have been appointed. Non-public expenditure is about 15 per cent of the budget, approximately 10 per cent being spent by families and approximately 5 per cent by firms. However, firms also contribute significantly to the financing of non-formal education through payment of an obligatory levy called the *taxe d'apprentissage*.

In France, as in many OECD countries, at the present time education is in the forefront of public and political attention. Reports of national commissions on every major sector of the education system have been published within the last few years. Books on education abound and flourish as never before. The media now regard education as eminently newsworthy.

The national authorities react by making it clear that they treat education as one of their highest priorities. Numerous plans for reform are already being implemented or are in the offing. The desire is to modernise education and make it more efficient while steadily expanding access to post-compulsory school opportunities. The curriculum must be made more relevant to the present and future needs of society, particularly in the field of technology. Standards are in question and there are considerable difficulties to surmount in grouping students to meet individual needs. Teachers must increase their professional knowledge and improve their skills. The schools must become more dynamic and flexible at all levels.

To achieve these ends it is necessary to move away from abstract or ideological goals and to promote concrete actions at the regional, departmental and institutional levels. That this will necessitate a reduction of the time-honoured, centralist authority of the Ministry of Education is fully recognised. There must be devolution of both administrative and decision-making powers. Schools must enjoy greater freedom of action.

The whole education system is currently under close public scrutiny; many people are concerned that educational standards have fallen and are still falling, though there appears to be no convincing evidence to support their pessimism. Ministerial proposals for reform are correspondingly broad in scope and mostly far-reaching in their potential effect. However, no sector is more crucial for the success of all the proposed reforms or poses more difficult problems than the collège unique (lower secondary comprehensive school).

The reviewers were in France for far too brief a time and visited far too few colleges and administrative units to be able to offer an in-depth and representative analysis of the detailed problems of the colleges. What we propose to do, therefore, is to highlight those aspects of the colleges, both historical and actual, that relate to their role as democratic institutions organised according to the principle of common schooling for all. We shall also concentrate on the renovation strategy adopted by the national authorities, even though, for the time being at least, only a minority of the colleges are affected by it. Our justification is that innovatory and experimental programmes evoke more challenging questions than long-established programmes.

ORIGINS AND CHARACTER OF THE "COLLEGE UNIQUE"

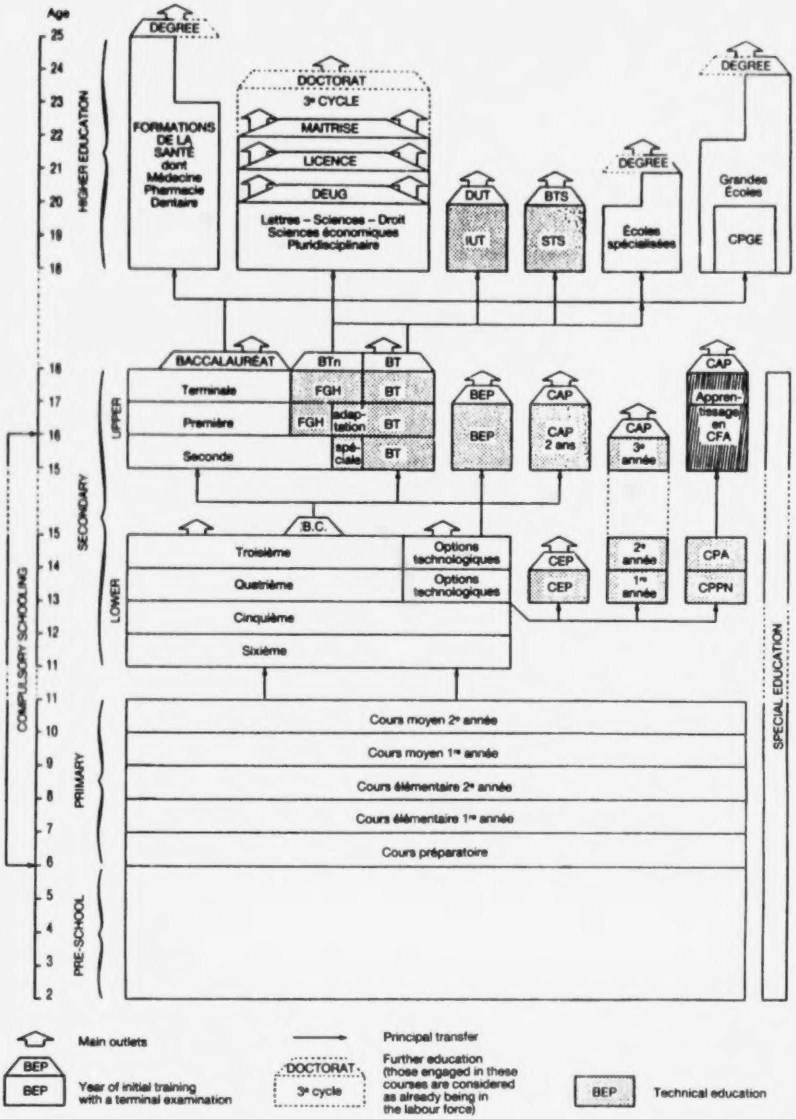
The development of a state system of education in France during the last quarter of the 19th century was propelled by acceptance of two basic principles:

-- primary education should be compulsory and free;
-- state education should be non-denominational.

Equality of access to basic knowledge, advancement of the individual and socialisation -- in other words, concern to gain support for the institutions of the Republic and thereby strengthen national unity -- were the main ideas behind the legislation of the early 1880s, which, significantly, extended secondary education to girls as well as boys.

However, except for a small number of scholarship pupils, access to secondary education remained for two generations within the framework of

THE EDUCATION SYSTEM UNDER THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
(school year 1982/83)


Age
25
24
23
22
21
20
19
18
HIGHER EDUCATION
DEGREE
FORMATIONS DE LA SANTÉ dont Médecine Pharmacie Dentaire
DOCTORAT
3e CYCLE
MAITRISE
LICENCE
DEUG
Lettres – Sciences – Droit Sciences économiques Pluridisciplinaire
DUT
IUT
BTS
STS
DEGREE
Écoles spécialisées
DEGREE
Grandes Écoles
CPGE
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BT
Terminale
FGH
BT
Première
FGH
adaptation
BT
Seconde
spéciale
BT
BEP
BEP
CAP
CAP 2 ans
CAP
3e année
CAP
Apprentissage en CFA
LOWER
15
14
13
12
11
B.C.
Troisième
Options technologiques
Quatrième
Options technologiques
Cinquième
Sixième
CEP
CEP
2e année
1re année
CPA
CPPN
COMPULSORY SCHOOLING
SPECIAL EDUCATION
PRIMARY
11
10
9
8
7
6
Cours moyen 2e année
Cours moyen 1re année
Cours élémentaire 2e année
Cours élémentaire 1re année
Cours préparatoire
PRE-SCHOOL
5
4
3
2
Main outlets
BEP
BEP
Year of initial training with a terminal examination
Principal transfer
DOCTORAT
3e cycle
Further education (those engaged in these courses are considered as already being in the labour force)
BEP
Technical education

Source : *Repères et références statistiques sur les enseignements et la formation, année scolaire et universitaire 1982/83*, Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, 1984.

traditional structures and values. Thus, in 1925 : i) the *lycées* (entry at age 11 -- 150 000 pupils) still had their own elementary classes whose teachers had to pass an examination; ii) grafted on to the primary school, which terminated at age 13, were primary continuation classes and upper primary schools, together with an agricultural and technical education system (6 500 000 pupils). In addition, Latin and Greek were excluded from girls' *lycées*.

Shortly after the First World War left-wing opinion began to agitate for comprehensive schooling (*l'école unique*). This was to come about only as the result of a long and gradual evolution that is still not complete some sixty years later. First, there was the development of agricultural and technical education and the unification of primary education (1925). Then came free lower secondary education and the raising of the school leaving age from 13 to 14 (1936). The incorporation of primary continuation classes and upper primary schools into secondary education and the creation of a "common core" from the sixth to the third grade followed in 1937.

From the late fifties the evolutionary process was accelerated. In 1959, the school leaving age was raised to 16 and *collèges d'enseignement général* (General Education Colleges -- to replace the former primary continuation classes) and collèges d'enseignement technique (technical education colleges) were created. In 1963, by the Act of 3 August (Fouchet reform) all the streams for the four years from age 11 to 15 were grouped together in a single school [the *Collège d'enseignement secondaire* (CES) -- Secondary Education College] and in 1975 the principle of non-streamed secondary colleges (*Collèges d'enseignement général*) was introduced. Progressively non-streamed classes would be introduced in all four years of the collèges. Reconsidered over time, the evolutionary process appears to have been remarkably continuous. However, the very slowness of the pace of change showed that the opposition to be overcome and the difficulties to be surmounted were numerous.

The *opposition* stemmed from an elitist concept of education. In France, perhaps more than in many other countries, it is impossible to disregard the tenacity of the idea of the secondary school as a centre of excellence, whose task is to initiate students into "the culture" and to equip the "most able" among them with the range of intellectual qualities that will enable them to succeed brilliantly in their university-level studies and to aspire to the top jobs in the land. "The culture" is seen both as a universal model and as a privileged domain to which access is obtained as the culmination of a long and intensive learning experience, where reference to the past and to tradition is an essential element. Hence the persistence in some sections of French society of nostalgia for the secondary school of yesteryear.

This has led to attempts to reverse the progress towards comprehensive secondary schooling. In 1923, for example, it was proposed to abolish the non-classical section and to make four years Latin and Greek compulsory for all secondary school pupils; in fact this measure, introduced by Bérard, Minister at the time, was never applied. In 1933, an entrance examination for the 6th grade was instituted. In 1941, free second-cycle secondary education was abolished. These measures, however, had only temporary effects.

Criticism of the CES after its creation in 1963 centred on three main defects:

i) The system did little to promote equality of opportunity, which was one of its main objectives; academic achievement was still too largely related to social background;

ii) Too many pupils failed to reach a satisfactory level of achievement at these colleges;

iii) The raising of the school leaving age did not produce the expected results; many pupils became bored with or hostile to the last years of schooling.

Some talked of reducing the period of common schooling for certain pupils and indeed the Royer Act of 1975 provided for the enrolment of 14 year-olds in pre-apprenticeships and sandwich courses. Even the principle of co-education came under fire. For example, in a collection of articles published in 1975 and written by persons engaged in teaching or educational research in institutions in Lyon the following comment appears on page 26 concerning the "alignment" of the education "of girls to that of boys" (referring to the decision, dating back to 1927, that both sexes should sit the same examination for the "agrégation" in philosophy and natural sciences and the decision in 1930 to allow "young ladies" to sit the "Concours général"): "This equality which has been forced upon us by the pattern of social behaviour is proving more and more catastrophic for feminity, and this alienation is introducing an increasingly marked factor of imbalance in the human race and in civilisation" (1).

Thus, of enduring significance to the contemporary debate on secondary education has been the constant reference to effort, emulation, the competition essential to elitism, selection and the knowledge that must be transmitted from generation to generation. But this reference has gone along with an unquenchable spirit of egalitarianism.

To sum up, the movement pressing for the introduction of what might be termed a "basic school" from age 3 to age 16, with the aim of providing every adolescent boy or girl with a common minimum fund of knowledge and appreciation of French culture, has led to slow but steady structural reform which continued whatever the political composition of governments and even throughout the war years, 1939 to 1945, culminating in the establishment of les collèges uniques (the unstreamed lower secondary comprehensive school) by Act of 1975.

Overt and underlying tensions

Today, ten years after the passing of the 1975 Royer Act, no one seriously questions that public education for the 11-15 age group should be provided under a common roof in each neighbourhood and to that extent the principle of comprehensive schooling is fully accepted. There are sharply conflicting views, however, about what that comprehensive principle should mean for organisation, curriculum, and pedagogy inside each school and evident tensions between the current objectives of the national authorities and the beliefs, values and attitudes of many teachers, administrators, parents and professional and political groupings. This is scarcely surprising in a country like France where there is both an exceptionally strong sense of tradition and a passion for contested ideas. Here we propose to discuss at some length the overt and underlying tensions that exist not only because they may help to explain the distinctive French situation but also because they reflect in varying degrees of intensity the debates surrounding the aims and provision of lower secondary education in all OECD countries.

The concept of equal access advocated during the post-war years gave way to that of equal opportunities, which in turn has been superseded by the concept of equal achievement. Equality of achievement is considered paramount, not only for the sake of distributive justice but also on social and political grounds (effective participation in society) and for economic reasons (greater efficiency). From this standpoint, it is no longer enough merely to provide the opportunity for lower secondary education; the great majority of pupils must also achieve success.

This new approach confronts the education system with the need to strike a satisfactory balance between new and traditional objectives, since nobody is really contemplating abandoning the latter. No trace will be found in any official or other text of any suggestion that education, and education of the highest possible standard, should no longer be provided.

However, opinions do differ over what should be taught. This is a difference that is often obscured either because it becomes entangled with discussions about quality or because controversy arises on the basis of unspecified postulates (e.g. attachment to a form of education as one would like it to be or at least as one remembers it, or to a traditional conception of culture). Undeniably, too, insistence upon high-quality secondary education is, for some, a way of refusing to acknowledge the elitist character of the old curriculum and hence indirectly resisting any genuine democratic reform. Words can imply different things to different people and some automatically associate equality with the lowering of standards. Others fear, equally automatically, that any reference to educational standards or to the principle of competition is a mere pretext for perpetuating an elitist curriculum based on social selection.

It is not easy, therefore, to transform the debate on what ought to be the most effective structures and pedagogy for the collège unique into a lively and constructive one, since each side tends to demand that a solution be found solely to the problems as it perceives them and to disregard the preoccupations of the other side. In other words, each becomes embroiled in the connotations that it reads into words rather than in seeking to clarify the issues and concepts involved. This gives to the debate a strong ideological tinge.

Thus, a number of recent publications describe present-day French education in almost apocalyptic terms. Jacqueline de Romilly, professor at the Sorbonne, lays the blame for all the present evils on politicisation in response to trade union pressure, "egalitarianism and the desire for standardisation on the one hand, materialism and the rejection of culture on the other" (p. 212). She attacks the left in France which "no sooner in power, starts levelling, dictating, standardising, suddenly no longer believing in emulation..." (p. 99) (2).

Mr. Jean Bories, Secretary-General of the CSEN (Confédération Syndicale de l'Education Nationale), drew attention in October 1983 to the danger of the reforms introduced by Haby (1975) and proposed by Legrand (1983) (3) being "both based on the outdated Langevin-Wallon Plan". Mr. Bories went on to say that he was anxious to see how the new Minister would see things (4). In the event, Mr. Chevènement stated his commitment to the acquisition of knowledge, individual effort and the need to reward merit and hard work, on several occasions expanding the idea of "republican elitism" (5).

Mr. Chevènement, like his predecessor Mr. Savary, worked to introduce a series of long-term educational measures designed first of all to ensure that pupils arriving in the collèges from the primary school are better prepared and, secondly, to reconcile the two objectives of raising the educational standards of the entire age group and allowing each pupil to achieve his potential and develop to the best of his abilities. These aims embrace both traditional values of equality and excellence and a contemporary concern with performance standards and updated curriculum and pedagogy. The real problem is whether they can be achieved on the basis of the assumptions predicated by the traditional academic school which, since it selected its students, designed its curriculum with the conviction that pupils could make progress from the outset or needed only to be motivated by a desire to achieve and to acquire knowledge.

Now that the objective of compulsory education is to bring every school-leaver up to the end of lower secondary education in a common school, there must be changed attitudes and approaches together with a redefinition of standards. The colleges must be receptive to the needs of the brightest pupils, while ensuring that all pupils not only can feel positive about their schooling but can gain a worthwhile education in the school context. There is no satisfaction in being the last or last-but-one in a class, or even in being an average plodder. Learning difficulties may certainly act as a stimulus, provided that they do not appear insurmountable, for then the reaction is to give up. Everything depends on providing the right amount and the right degree of challenge.

A student who wants to learn may, perhaps, accept an unsatisfactory relationship with a teacher because the desire to learn outweighs discontent. The same is not true of the average or poor student, for whom a good affective relationship with teachers, peers and the school as a whole is an indispensable requirement. Hence the idea, often discussed but rarely implemented in planning reforms of lower secondary education, of providing during school hours activities not specifically aimed at the direct acquisition of knowledge but rather at building interpersonal relationships.

Without going so far as to use the term "ethnocentric class" to describe the culture on which the secondary school bases its approach, it nonetheless has to be admitted that a substantial proportion of students do, as a result of their socio-cultural background, find difficulty in acclimatising to it. In addition to such cultural differences there are the normal differences between individuals and the normal wide range of interests and aptitudes when all the pupils in a given age group attend the same school.

It is not surprising that college organisation -- a problem whose complexity is fully recognised by both the administrative and educational authorities -- is more often than not considered by public opinion (or rather by sections of it) in too simplistic terms. This explains why the tendency is very often towards controversy rather than analysis. How is effort to be reconciled with understanding? How is emulation to be developed while avoiding discouragement? How can all students be given a common cultural grounding while at the same time respecting the diversity of their initial experience, aptitudes and interests? Can there be equality and excellence and, if so, what practical forms might they take in the schools of the nineties?

It is necessary to take this analysis further and this has been accepted as part of the experimental programme within the collège system. Nevertheless, there is in practice a long way to go. Certain questions remain unanswered. What should the reconstructed common core curriculum for all students comprise and up to what level? At what age is it necessary for the development of the student to pay greater attention to individual needs? Above all, bearing in mind the fact that the collège age span includes puberty, the physiological phase when the adult begins to develop from the child, building up his or her own identity, and a young person achieves individuality not by conforming but by being different, how is the need for individualism and differentiation to be catered for?

Once again, the questions would seem to be complicated by the terms used. On the one hand, there is a call for discipline, unconditional surrender to the demands of the adult world, which knows better than the young what is good for them, and the condemnation of "lax" behaviour and attitudes. On the other, there is a tendency to deny the existence of conflict, to forget that being "anti" must mean anti something that does exist, something that asserts its own individuality, perhaps even by reference to models. Both sides overlook the fact that the conflict between generations, at school and elsewhere, can only be resolved and lead to progress through negotiation. To rebel against school or vandalise a phone-booth may simply be a way of proclaiming a desire for individual identification or it may betoken the much debated gap between the school cultures of order, control and social participation on the one hand, and expressive, inward-looking youth culture on the other.

No compulsory schooling can evade the responsibility of allowing each person to have his own being, construct his own identity, and make full use of his or her own capacities for growth, both individually and in the peer group. But it has to reconcile these with other social demands concerned with the acquisition of knowledge in certain fields and of certain values including effective participation in the wider society. Has not the tone of the arguments become either apocalyptic (in reference to an often idealised past) or irenic (in reference to a hypothetical future) because society is reluctant to tackle the real issue: what fields of knowledge and understanding? what values and skills? what forms of constructive action for youth?

In relation to education, France is a divided society, as evidenced by the large numbers of professional associations, albeit grouped together in federations or confederations, and by the existence alongside them of more than one national federation of parents' associations. These are certainly challenging conditions for formulating school projects, which can only result from an ongoing consensus of teachers and parents -- not to mention pupils!

Nor are they conducive to a sufficiently broad and unequivocal approval of ministerial decisions. It is a question, therefore, as to how shared decision-making, let alone consensus, is to be negotiated in practice.

The Ministry of Education remains for the time being the starting point for change. However, it cannot be the end point, and institutional centralisation is not calculated to defuse the political debate about educational problems or ensure that it is conducted in a calm atmosphere. It will be interesting, therefore, to see how the plan to decentralise unfolds. We foresee a need to extend it in terms as much of community and pupil participation in decision-making as of a devolution of professional roles and responsibilities.

All the above factors help to explain the polemical character of any discussion in France about education. They also explain the discrepancy between the gradual but continuous nature of structural reforms promulgated at central level, and the misgivings, delays and opposition encountered in their practical application.

Having sketched the salient features of the historical and cultural background of the collège unique and discussed the debate over its aims and functions, we now intend to consider the present goals of public policy, the strategies designed to attain them and the organisational, structural, curricular and pedagogical factors that have to be taken into account. In doing so we shall be examining the significance of the two concepts of "transformation" and "renovation" that inform governmental action.

OBJECTIVES: TRANSFORMATION OR RENOVATION

The "renovation" or renewal of the common school forms one part of an orchestrated reform of the entire education system. But in that reform it occupies a central place. For in France, as in virtually all OECD countries today, the search is intensive for an educational experience that will:

a) enable all young people in the age group 11-16 to complete satisfactorily their compulsory schooling;

b) instil in all young people the motivation and ability to pursue further studies after 16, whether on a full-time or part-time basis;

c) provide a curriculum adapted to the exigencies of new scientific and technological developments and the requirements of the world of work both actual and anticipated;

d) favour the acquisition of personal and group qualities such as creativity, social concern, autonomy, responsibility, liberty, individual development, socialisation and effectiveness;

e) enable students to make wise career choices through a progressive understanding of their own aptitudes and a progressive development of their personalities.

As already indicated, the pursuit of these rather general and far-reaching goals is complicated by the vehemence of debate and the divisions arising within it.

Catering for students from mixed backgrounds and with varying abilities and diverse interests must be reconciled with the fundamental objective of equality of opportunity and a basic education for all, that being the foundation not only of all future individual growth but also of the consolidation of a society that is determined to be both socially equitable and economically strong. In the words of M. Savary, the former Minister of Education: "It is a question of constructing the future of our youth, and therefore of our country" (6).

For his part, M. Chevènement, has declared in an interview with two journalists: "Democracy does not imply that everyone should be measured in the same way but that all should receive a good basic education that will reinforce social unity and give each individual a real opportunity to achieve his full potential.... In order that France can rebuild its elites, it is necessary that everyone should have his chance and the Republic afford that chance to those who would not otherwise have it. We need more (university) students and therefore more upper secondary students. It is imperative -- and that is the thrust of our actual policy -- to induce 80 per cent of each age cohort (as against 63 per cent today) to take advantage of upper secondary education between now and the beginning of the nineties. It is necessary that in the year 2000, 75 per cent of young people, as against rather less than 50 per cent today, go as far as the baccalauréat" (7).

The collège having become within the French education system "an obligatory point of passage for all students", priority has been accorded to its renovation (M. Savary) or to its transformation (M. Chevènement) (8). These are firm and clear statements. Yet the very terms invite challenge in a situation where key concepts -- future of the country, democracy, social unity, full potential of individuals, etc. -- loom large in prolonged ideological debates. Decisive action is envisaged in a succession of reform measures. Its achievement tests the adaptive capacity of the education system to the full.

In broad terms the intention at the collège level is: to provide the minimum of education indispensable today if each young person is to master his or her personal problems and participate actively in the life of society; to enable all students to have a positive relationship with their collèges; to insist upon purposeful study, individual learning, and all-round development within the context of a lifelong learning philosophy; to augment substantially the percentage of those eligible for upper secondary education and thereafter the university; to prepare the remainder for positive achievement in their training for a career.

The very organisation of the collèges and the overall structure of the education provided for the 11-16 age group must be changed accordingly. Whereas, at the outset of the collège renewal initiative in February 1983, the priority was full realisation of the idea of the collège unique, which according to the Loi Haby of 1975 had replaced the college organised in selective streams, the expectation today is more circumspect. No doubt, this is due to the difficulties met on the ground. Now the collège unique is still the ultimate goal to strive for but at a future date that is not to be specified. The development of a "differentiated pedagogy" and provision of effective assistance to students with learning difficulties aim to raise the success rate and reduce the present recourse to parallel courses (CPPN, pre-vocational classes -- and CPA, pre-apprenticeship classes).

The upgrading of technical and vocational training and the renovation or transformation of the vocational secondary schools, notably through developing their third and fourth forms (grades), where appropriate within certain colleges, must accompany the renovation of the colleges.

By the same token, the basic education provided in technical subjects must be reinforced and technology must penetrate the colleges. Finally, all the technical and vocational institutions must be brought progressively to offer courses up to the baccalauréat level. The principle of equivalent levels of achievement will come, therefore, to complement that of a unified education. These imperatives imply yet more changes and development in the educational infrastructure and the major "delivery systems": curriculum, pedagogy, school organisation, the corps of administrators and teachers.

A key strategic objective concerns the training of teachers, the "priority of priorities", as the reviewers were informed. The qualifications of serving teachers and student teachers must be raised both as regards professional skills and adaptation to the pedagogical requirements of renovation and transformation. A training strategy has been designed for this purpose.

Another set of objectives is to tailor the content of schooling, school organisation, and pedagogy to contemporary and future scientific and technological developments. To this end a process of curricular reform has begun. The substitution in the colleges of a technology course (two hours weekly) for the former crafts and technical subjects, for example, is designed to integrate technology into the cultural system and to inform the whole curriculum. Differential pedagogy is also being pursued but the difficulties are considerable not least due to the debate over mixed ability grouping versus streaming or setting.

Yet another objective, which is rightly judged crucial for the achievement of all other objectives, is to identify and utilise effective instruments of reform in planning, management and research and development. The intention is not only to act through newly decentralised administrative and managerial structures but to rely on innovative projects proposed by collèges to the Recteurs d'Académie within the framework of options prescribed by the Ministry after widespread consultation. The authorities wish to avoid putting a damper on innovations from the centre. Each collège has accordingly a margin of manoeuvre that should enable it to tackle its distinctive problems effectively. To make teachers creative agents and not only executants in the change process, to make renovation a collegial enterprise engaging parents as well as local communities and to foster collaboration between collèges are among measures designed to give teaching and learning fresh impetus.

In all OECD societies education systems must seek to maintain a dialectical exchange between two pressures: those which come from central sites or agencies in society and tend to impose a uniform model, and those which come from the local setting and tend to place the accent on differentiation or localism. In France, a dynamic confrontation of those two pressures is being elaborated for the first time. The authorities believe that the concrete measures under way to break down the rigid structures of the past, to modify traditional attitudes, to develop the idea that teaching at the institutional level is a team effort which must associate all the actors concerned are bound to facilitate transformation of the French *collège* system and endow it with the capacity for periodic self-renewal.

RENOVATION STRATEGIES

We have noted that it is no longer the intention of the education authorities to proceed in the traditional, centralist manner of issuing decrees and commands from a single central site, namely the Ministry of National Education, and using the inspectorates and the sanctions of a hierarchically controlled system to ensure conformity with policies. In view of the strong centralised tradition in France and many other countries it is worth dwelling on this point. Power-coercive traditions, even when informed by a high degree of rationalisation, die hard.

As in other OECD countries, experience and research have shown the inadequacies, indeed the dangers, of centrally directed and orchestrated reforms in the contemporary world. A school is not merely a cipher or one of a very large series of uniform entities within a vast machine, but has its own culture, style, self-image and mode of activity through which it adapts uniquely to its own environment. Frequently, in our visits and discussions, we were reminded that, in the words of one principal: "We are always in the middle of a reform". Another principal said: "National education in France is always changing". In other words, reforms are perceived to be at one and the same time ubiquitous and distant. The reality is what the school, in its own setting or environment, is obliged and able to cope with, that is, something which is more specific, concrete and distinctive than the grand strategies conceived by central bodies.

However, it may be argued that the aim of the reform strategy is to move from a naked assertion of power (the power-coercive mode) on the one hand, to a combination of rational persuasion and an appeal to the professional values of the actors in education, on the other. There is a body of research findings to support the desirability of such a move. Nevertheless, we must consider the socio-political cultural-economic realities. Many teachers and principals affirmed their willingness to participate in the experimental projects but they invariably pointed out the resource implications: the need for additional materials; increased funding to permit alleviation of worsening staff/student ratios in areas where the student population is increasing and the provision of more in-service training course opportunities; a readiness by the authorities to confront the acute problem of the deprivation cycle associated with lower socio-economic groups, high unemployment, and certain communities containing high proportions of migrants.

It is necessary, therefore, to question the capacity to sustain and diffuse renovation, which is, at present, concentrated in 500 schools. There is, inevitably, a resource gap between these schools and the college system as a whole, with 4 940 colleges, ranging in enrolments from less than 100 to more than 1 200 students, and distributed over all parts of a large and diverse country. Thus, the resource issue is compounded by the diversity as well as the size of the system. Is it possible to generalise the renovation by rational-empirical means and by a natural process of diffusion, where it is patently impossible to inject throughout the whole system additional resources and support? We shall return to this question but, before doing so, we must point to another difficulty that arises in implementing a centrally determined, national strategy.

There is ample evidence in the information we gathered from our meetings and visits and the research and journalistic literature of deep divisions within the teaching profession in France. In the section dealing with teachers, we draw attention to the structural problems arising from the threefold classification of the teaching force as regards pre-service training, conditions of employment, status and remuneration. It is not at all surprising that such a profound division should create disharmony and lead to the politicisation of professional issues. Moreover, there are further divisions, inherent in the bifurcation of the school as an institution, between the "management team" (principal, deputy(ies), _conseiller_, _intendant(e_) and the "instructional team" (teachers), not to speak of the emergence of organised parent power as a kind of third force, alongside the unions and the state apparatus.

These phenomena are not, of course, unique to France and are indeed commonplace in many OECD countries. However, they do constitute a problem for a nationally conceived and orchestrated strategy. We were unable to extend our inquiries into the mechanism whereby these various, often divergent, interests reach agreements and understandings about the strategy of the renovation or how far their responses and reactions to the progress of the renovation are taken into account in the process of review and evaluation. It is evident, however, that tensions and conflicts are strong and that, despite and perhaps because of the fact that participation by schools is voluntary, moves that might be made to generalise the renovation are likely to encounter considerable resistance for structural reasons as well as the others we have mentioned.

The crux of the matter is that the problem of "reform" is really a problem of society and culture. The strategy of centrally-directed, imposed change involving all schools is, for a number of reasons, ruled out. Yet there are compelling reasons -- social and cultural as well as strictly educational -- for the authorities to seek to generalise the changes so painstakingly and painfully set in motion in the very establishment of the _collèges_. Moreover, there have been, and may still be, political imperatives to speed the progress of change. Some, indeed, would argue that throughout the succession of reforms the motivations have commonly been as much political as pedagogical.

Is the reform process, then, blocked in an impasse? Renovation for reasons of equity, social need, and educational quality, ought to be system-wide to incorporate a national strategy, but the system is such that the central authorities are powerless to develop, let alone maintain, a nation-wide process of change. The key to the resolution of this difficulty must lie within the resources, ingenuity, energy and creativity of the *collèges* since they are the major vehicles of education and the site of the professional expertise necessary for the prosecution of *any* educational policies. In making this observation, we have, however, two qualifications to make. First, as was wisely pointed out by one of the rectors whom we met, a realistic time-scale for system-wide change involves decades of sustained effort and not a crash programme. Secondly, recognition of the creative potential of *collèges* as educational development agencies entails a drastic reappraisal by the central and regional authorities of their own educational and administrative assumptions, values and styles. What is quite clear is that a school-focused and school-based orientation towards educational development requires a rethinking of the strategy, including acceptance of freedom, diversity and a measure of competition as key elements in corporate school life. It is one thing to argue that a grand national strategy of renovation has been adopted with school action as a focus. It is another to accept that the aims, values, goals and procedures of development must themselves be derived through discussion and negotiation in which school communities, including parents and students, are senior partners, with state administrators playing the role of enablers and facilitators.

We do not underestimate the difficulty and complexity of instituting such a change in the strategy itself. Our argument is that, on the admission of personnel whom we interviewed at every level in the system and on the evidence available to us, the changes contemplated in the renovation movement cannot be realised in practice using a strategy of national direction and control. This strategy, relying as it does on utopian reports, attempted guidance by a unitary directorate, and experimental work of a more or less innovatory kind in a group of trial schools, does not seem to be capable of achieving the ends sought. By contrast, a concerted attempt to bring out and build upon the professional expertise of the *collèges* themselves would overcome some of the basic problems in the present approach. The major necessity would be to find ways of involving all the colleges by building up collaborative networks and groups of institutions and personnel. We shall discuss below some of these changes and the difficulties that might be associated with them.

Each *collège* is immersed in the social environment which sustains it and reflects its structure and contradictions. It is wise to acknowledge the fact and, instead of seeking to mastermind large-scale reform strategies that presuppose a false consensus on aims, values and procedures, to reach towards the resolutions of these contradictions, not least by enabling the *collèges* to address concretely and practically the circumstances of their own work.

THE EDUCATIONAL ACTORS

In the scenario for the reform of the *collèges* to which we have addressed our review, there are several key groups of actors: the students for whom, ultimately, the benefits of whatever changes occur are expected to

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accrue; their parents, who are charged with moral, legal and personal responsibility for the well-being of their children; the teachers, who carry the direct burden and responsibility for educating youth, including the teachers in the elementary schools and the lycées; the administrators, whether within the school setting or external to it; the inspectorate, which, especially in la vie scolaire, constitutes a cadre of specialist and dedicated animateurs; the politicians and other groups of community representatives who are responsible for the formation and implementation of the larger aspects of educational policy. We propose to focus on the crucial roles of teachers, administrators and inspectors.

In an open society, where values are plural, ideologies are often conflicting, and interests are diverse not to say contradictory, it can scarcely be expected that harmony will always reign in the relations among the several groups of actors. Even within each group there are inevitable divergences and conflicts. It is unrealistic to expect unanimity of outlook or commonality of action, yet it is a presupposition of a comprehensive reform strategy, intended eventually to embrace all students in all schools, that somehow a convergence of interests will be achieved and that agreement will be reached over the course of reform. Alternatively, if it is admitted that such agreement will be forever elusive, a system of negotiations, checks and balances and agreements to differ is required. Interests can be "traded" when they cannot be reconciled but, where this is so, there are likely to be periods of internal conflict and there is always the possibility of a divergence of interpretations and resolutions of events.

Leaving aside the political and community arenas, which our inquiries did not encompass, this divergence is nowhere more apparent than within the ranks of the teachers, who, with the inspectorate, are the main body of actors responsible for the implementation of the reform. The fundamental problem, widely acknowledged on all sides, is the structural division within the teaching profession whereby recognition, status, remuneration and prospects are in inverse relationship to the hours and the nature of teaching itself. Teaching is a divided profession. We understand the historical and cultural reasons for this. What we find more difficult to understand is how such a profoundly divided and unequal set of structural relationships can be reconciled with the goals, values and processes of the reform. It seems to us that unless ways can be found to achieve, for the teaching profession, the recognition of "different but equal" that is sought for students within the college, these divisions will undermine the reform. Thus, the aspirations to establish whole school policies, to create teams of teachers, to bring about curriculum equality for practical subjects, to establish an extended professional model of teaching, to achieve all that is implied by the democratisation of education cannot be realised in practice unless ways can be found to resolve the structural disequilibrium of the three major groupings within the teaching profession.

We found much evidence in the schools we visited of teacher professionalism, commitment, and resourcefulness. There were many examples of participation by teachers in the overall life of the school, whereby the artificial, if contractually significant, boundaries between what is "required" of a teacher and that which is freely given, were dissolved. In the most adventurous and innovative of schools, the teachers were working as a whole staff and were achieving, through their participation in local research and development projects, a measure of professional development comparable with what any outside course and workshop might provide. All of this is evidence of a potential that is present and being tapped at least in selected collèges.

Yet there seems to be a second major cluster of problems about teachers and teaching which seriously compound those discussed above. Several of those in key positions, responsible for the operation of the education system and for the reform of the collège, have argued both orally and in print that there is a serious mismatch between the capacities of the average teacher in the collèges and the demands now being laid on him or her by society at large.

The point here is not simply that the teachers on the whole are, as yet, unprepared to meet the requirements of the reform. That would be a serious problem but it could be argued that it is a commonplace one, whose resolution lies as much in reviewing and reconsidering the goals and timetable of the reform as in changes in teacher selection, initial training and further professional development. The criticism of teachers that we encountered went beyond the reform in suggesting that they are simply out of touch with the needs and interests of the students now in the collèges. The reason for this, it was argued, is threefold: first, teachers are deeply imbued with an instructional or transmission mentality whereby their perceived role is to initiate students into the systems of the separate disciplines; secondly, teachers are poorly informed about and often unsympathetic towards the rapidly changing external environment of employment and youth cultures. Thirdly, there is in general a profound dislocation of educational values from prevailing social mores. As a consequence of these shortcomings, school life is said to retain a kind of aridity and formalism, thereby preserving a by now stultified and effete intellectual culture at the expense of emotional, moral and physical development, economic awareness and competence and the multifarious pressures and demands of a rapidly changing technology. Thus, it is said, students emerge from the collèges at the age of 16, typically demanding independence but unable to achieve or exercise it, and the collège regime persists with its rigidities, its isolationism and its internal struggles among the teachers whose energies are dissipated in a combination of instructional pedagogy and internecine union warfare!

Although this part of our scenario may seem dramatically overdrawn, it is no more than a reflection of interpretations of the position of teachers and the teaching profession, freely volunteered by several responsible discussants. We have pointed to the exceptions, both whole schools and individuals, that we encountered. Nor can we be entirely convinced by spasms of self-doubt and criticism in an education system which has manifestly enjoyed such success in its chosen terms and in which the central authorities have the self-confidence to embark on a comprehensive strategy of renovation. Commitment to such a strategy itself betokens a belief in the qualities of at least the key personnel in teaching since the strategy has been clearly grounded in the teacher participation of each collège.

There is, therefore, no small element of paradox in the vigorous pursuit of the plan to renovate the collège and a concomitant and fundamental questioning of the readiness of the main body of the teaching force to join in, as they certainly need to, if this programme is to succeed. The resolution of this paradox obviously calls for a renewed commitment to the professionalism and patent idealism of the teaching profession combined with a determined attempt to overcome the basic structural dichotomies by creating a unified cadre of collège teachers.

In this discussion of the dramatis personae of the renovation our interest has been focused primarily on the teachers and we make no apology for this in view of their key role. Our inquiries were too limited to enable us to say much about how the students seem to be participating in and responding to the changes underway. One point that did strike us, most favourably, is the extent to which students are being introduced to collège-wide roles and inducted into positions of responsibility. Students were ready to give their views in a school council meeting, in a gathering of class representatives, and in casual encounters. Perhaps the relatively recent institution of the school counsellor and the encouragement to independence and initiative by the librarians (documentalists) are responsible -- our evidence is too limited for firm judgements -- but, wherever the responsibility lies, there was welcome manifestation of an active student life. It seems to us of the utmost importance that opportunities for students to participate fully in the life of the collège, to assume greater responsibilities for their own learning and to be more active in the actual construction of learning situations be provided. The dominant instructional mode dies very hard indeed in education and while it has its place, there is need to put alongside it more active and participative modes, with a greater emphasis on linkages between the everyday lives of the students and school learning.

In this section, we wish to mention two key groups in the management, monitoring and evaluating of change: the within-school administrators and the inspectorate. Within the complex structure of administering and inspecting French education our particular interest in this report is in the interesting and potentially highly significant relationship between the collège management team -- the principal, deputy, conseiller, documentalist and intendant(e) -- and the inspectors of la vie scolaire. There is a further set of relationships, on the one hand, between the inspectorate and the Direction Générale des Collèges, and, on the other, the school management team and the teachers which deserve much closer scrutiny than we were able to give.

Perhaps we can best summarise our views on these roles, linkages and connections by highlighting two key factors in an educational change strategy: the identification of key agents for change, who will initially form a minority in any system, and the elaboration of linkages and networks connecting those agents with one another and binding them with the field which it is the aim of the change to transform. First, we were frequently impressed by the high degree of expertise, the professional capability, the cohesiveness and the experience of management. Uniformly, and reasonably in our judgement, principals demanded more autonomy and a better recognition of their qualities, expertise and ability to move education forward. The principals, as serious professionals, are chafing under a sense of restraint. But it was pointed out that they are not always adequately trained, or again, that their educational role is highly constrained by the sharp organisational distinction drawn between administration and pedagogy. Greater responsibility, combined with a reappraisal of internal relationships, could be the means of focusing on the need for further professional training for principals and winning their active participation in the change process.

The key roles of the principal and of senior staff members in creating a climate for educational change, building up morale, steering through difficult decisions and sustaining momentum are widely acknowledged in many OECD countries. Our inquiries left us with a sense of confidence in the senior school personnel whom we met, though it must be said that their administrative duties appear to be so onerous as to prevent them fom exploiting their creative capacities.

Turning to the inspectorate, we have two observations. Clearly, in the French system, the inspectors are carefully selected and constitute a very powerful resource of intelligence, expertise and experience. Their roles, as in a sense guardians of educational values and standards, oblige them to keep one foot in the camp of the reformers, and another in that of the traditionalists, whether among the educationists or in society at large. The relative independence of the inspectorate is an important safeguard of their integrity and provides reassurance in their role as monitors and evaluators of schooling and its outcomes. We could not, to our regret, explore in depth the mode of operation of *la vie scolaire* but, from our observations and discussions, reached the tentative conclusion that it is through the activities of this group, working in close association with the college management team that some of the most difficult problems in the renovation might be overcome.

The key concept here is educational leadership, a term which fell into some disfavour during the era of democratisation and the pursuit of equality of opportunity. Yet a strategy of renovation in the kinds of situation we have observed, and on the scale envisaged, cannot escape the obligation to identify, bring forth and provide support for these groups who will pioneer the way and encourage others to do likewise. We can see no way in which, in the foreseeable future, the whole of a numerous and deeply divided teaching profession can be brought into the centre of the renovation of the *collège*. On the other hand, for the teacher to be excluded is to admit defeat or to fail to appreciate the central part the *collèges* themselves must play. We think that one way out of the impasse might be to devise ways and means of strengthening and sustaining the network of *la vie scolaire*, progressively bringing into it those teachers who are active in and committed to the systematic review, evaluation and development of their own teaching. Such a move would constitute a shift in the spotlight from the central strategies and structures to the field of operation. It would also entail, as we have pointed out in the section on strategies, a recognition that a unitary grand strategy would, over time, give way to a multiplicity of generative and interconnected centres.

Finally, we must refer briefly to the role of parents, briefly because we have very little evidence to go on. Although the national associations of parents have considerable influence, we gained the impression that at the *collège* and classroom level parents play a marginal role. The issue of parental participation in the daily life of the *collèges* evidently calls for some investigation.

THE COLLEGE CONTEXT

We visited only a very small sample of schools in and around Paris, in the city of Lyon and in the surrounding country-side. No claim can be made for the representativeness of these visits as a sample of the context of schooling, other than that their selection was designed to provide variety: urban and rural, poorer and wealthier areas, schools participating in the reform and those not doing so. The knowledge and understanding arising from our observations and discussions have been augmented by written material including both primary and secondary sources, but it remains true that this part of our report necessarily has a highly impressionistic character.

That said, what are our impressions? To answer this question, we divide our remarks into two parts:

-- the situation observed, with reference to aims and values, curriculum, pedagogy, school organisation and materials and resources; the kinds of changes envisaged by the reform, with reference to aims, values, curriculum, etc.;
-- the size and nature of the gap between the situation observed and the changes envisaged; and ways that are being or might be pursued to fill the gap.

Our reason for going beyond a merely descriptive approach in discussing the site context is that the reform process itself envisages a dynamic collège which is expected or hoped to form the focus of the change strategy.

The situation observed

Our perception of the collèges visited and read about is of institutions that are efficiently organised and managed according to clearly defined, if increasingly debatable, aims and values. The source of these aims and values, insofar as they are articulated, is twofold: official policy formulation and the goals and values of the staff directly responsible for the conduct of the schools. The collège is an institution run by teachers; more precisely, an institution in which teachers and administrative and ancillary staff are employed to exercise firm and direct control over educational policy and procedures, in accordance with official specifications including both legal and administrative requirements. However, the collèges must subsist with two sets of aims and values: those which they have inherited from their chequered history and from the deep social, cultural and educational divisions which lie at the heart of that history, and the contemporary aspirations of the reform. Whereas the former attest to the force of tradition, established practice and congeries of competing interests that are part of the deep structure of French society, the latter reflect a desire to reform, renew, change and develop, in accordance with a mixture of democratic, economic, technological and cultural values. In our observations of practice, we were struck more by the prevalence of the former than by any keenly expressed desire to achieve the latter. Despite a couple of notable exceptions, about which we say more below, the problems that were raised were less those of how, in the school, to rise to the visionary challenges of the Legrand report, for example, than of confronting more everyday realities: class size, heterogeneous student populations, lack of resources, burdensome working conditions and so forth.

What is true of aims and values is, mutatis mutandis, true of curriculum and pedagogy. According to the theories of Bourdieu and others of that school, there is a profound sense in which curriculum and pedagogy cannot escape reproducing, reinstating or embodying the established values, meanings, symbolic systems and structures of the prevailing social groupings. There are some difficulties with their analysis, not least its inability to account for such change as does occur and its tendency to assimilate actual social structures to theoretically predetermined models. Nevertheless, whatever limitations to its application there may be outside France, within the curriculum and pedagogy of the collège may be found supporting evidence for Bourdieu's analysis. The curriculum is less a transaction between partners in learning than a series of cognitive structures, skills and activities expressed quite formally in syllabuses, texts, tests and examinations to which students and teachers alike are committed. The rules of negotiation of the text are not set freely by the teachers themselves but arise from their own intellectual formation and professional preparation and from the prolific guidance offered in official papers.

It is questionable, therefore, whether sufficient means of introducing significant change in curriculum and pedagogy -- and pedagogical change is central to the whole scheme of renovation -- are to be found in the foregoing structures and procedures. Thus, while subjects or subject matter and pedagogical innovations are proclaimed as needed (e.g. technology, mixed ability teaching), changes are proposed for teacher training, pre-service and in-service, and ways are outlined and tried for introducing reforms into schools by the teachers, the reality is somewhat different. Schools in general seem in practice not to be obviously pursuing new approaches in curriculum and pedagogy. Such changes as are to be observed on the ground seem more clearly a result of the individual and corporate endeavour of particular groups of teachers, in particular settings, than an embodiment of centrally determined policies or widespread professional aspirations.

As to actual organisation, what is very striking for an observer of the French collège is the clarity and order of structures whereby authority and responsibility are divided between the administrators and managers, on the one hand, and the instructors and pedagogical experts on the other. There is a Cartesian touch to this dualism which extends from the highest reaches of the Inspectorate (doyen and separate staff, respectively, for "education" and "administration") to the processes of decision-making in the school itself. On the one hand, the principal and the administrative/management team; on the other hand, the teachers, not grouped strongly in subject or area departments as in the schools of Anglo-Saxon countries, not operating in a collegial framework but as individual subject specialists.

Our impression of the resources and materials available for study is that they are of comparatively modest proportions given both the overall wealth of France and the curriculum and pedagogical assumptions of the reform. It is evident that mixed ability teaching and the introduction of new subject matter demand additional materials for teaching and learning. But, while the quality is often high, the quantity of provision is often surprisingly low. The rich resource of printed materials, a proud feature of

French culture, is not always visible in the collèges, the provision of tools, equipment, materials, facilities for technology, and for physical education, for drama, music, pottery and home economics, business studies and commerce seems to be a major problem. Yet just such provision is needed for the full thrust of the reform at the school level to be realised.

The gap

We have indicated that, despite a plethora of reports, policy proposals, declarations and machinery at the national and regional levels for promoting, monitoring and evaluating the reform, there remains a very considerable gap between the aims of the reform and classroom reality. Take, for example, the well-known problem of repeating. Most OECD countries have now abolished this practice in the compulsory school. In France, it continues. The striking phenomenon is the decrease in repeating at the primary level and the significant increase at the lower secondary level since the Haby reform. The cumulative rate in the latter increased from less than 30 per cent in 1975 to about 38 per cent in 1980 but was accompanied by a decrease in transfers to CPPN and CPA. There are three possible explanations. First, the collèges are coping with the negative consequences of the lower repeater rates in the primary school, that is, pupils are entering the collèges less well prepared than in the past. Secondly, the diminished transfer rate to CPPN and CPA retains in the collèges the pupils who were oriented in the past to pre-professional courses. Thirdly, the introduction of unstreamed classes in the 6ème has saddled the collèges with the task of teaching mixed ability groups and they cannot discharge it effectively. Whatever the explanation there is a fundamental problem to be resolved.

The gap between aspirations and the classroom reality is not confined to France. On the contrary, the modern research literature on educational innovation in OECD Member countries is replete with references to innovations that "fail" or permeate only small sections of the system for which they are intended, or to national reform movements which produce results very different from those intended. In the face of such findings, policy-makers have tended either to retreat from the reform (hence, for example, in parts of the United States a "return to basics" or the reaffirmation of traditional educational values) or to bring forward a second or third front (hence the new issue of school-focused innovation in the Swedish comprehensive school).

There is a third option, which is to recast the parameters including timetables for change. With reference to France, the collège context constitutes a much more formidable challenge to reform than has been envisaged by many of those impatient for change, mainly for reasons of economy, social order or political concern. It seems to us that not only is the gap between observed school contexts and the aims of the reform great, but that there are several peculiarly obdurate or tenacious aspects of school culture that bear closer analysis than they may have received. Thus, the physical configuration of what may well be the typical school: solid structures with immovable walls dividing spaces into instructional cells; orderly, tidy, rather over-hygienic spaces which people, adults as well as children, move into and out of according to fixed schedules; small outside play or recreation areas which are places for "letting off" steam but are not treated as an integral part of an overall educational environment; formalised relations between adults and adolescents, structured by syllabuses, texts and pre-specified learning tasks; limited availability of and access to a rich and varied array of resources and material. These are places where students are assimilated into a culture whose main outlines and tendencies have deep historical roots and associations and of which teachers are bearers, intermediaries, transmitters. School environments too often are landscaped according to the forms and principles of an outmoded classical educational culture.

Our argument, however, is not with all of these features as such. After all, they help to explain the continuity, power and brilliance of one of the world's most enduring and impressive elites. Moreover, the school context, as outlined here, is itself a result of a series of quite dramatic changes and oscillations that have, since the days of the Haby reform, kept French education in a ferment of experiment. Our contention is that the gap between the wider aspirations, the forward movement, the imperatives of the reform, and the practice and settings of school teaching and learning may be too great for it to be bridged by the measures now adopted. It is from the school context itself that the challenge arises. Given the commitment to the reform, the options appear twofold. Either supplementary measures can be introduced, more focused than heretofore on the full range of school contextual factors (and we have discussed only a few of them). Alternatively, the timetable for reform can be rescheduled as part of a recasting of the parameters. We shall return to these options in the conclusions of our report.

MONITORING AND EVALUATING THE RENOVATION

The need for regular monitoring and systematic evaluation of educational innovations is widely recognised by all Ministries of Education responsible for large budgets and highly visible programmes. Evaluation studies of widely differing types have, in consequence, become a significant element in educational research. Their quantity and variety have resulted not only in enhanced understanding of the processes of and conditions affecting innovation but also in a strenuous debate about the meaning and uses of evaluation data for decision-making purposes.

It is technically and perhaps financially feasible to install comprehensive and frequent surveys, for example of student performance or the utilisation of specially provided resources. Good statistics on performance, indeed, are one of the positive features of the collège reform. More difficult, but within the bounds of possibility, are studies of factors in educational settings that appear to facilitate or inhibit performance. However, the complexity of these settings, which include a range of home and community as well as within-school factors, complicates the analysis enormously and does increase the likelihood of controversy about findings, especially when we remember the arguments over the so-called cultural deprivation thesis. It is one thing to claim that certain "problems" in home and family background "account" for low educational attainment, another to demonstrate their effects on attainment levels.

For the renovation of the *collèges*, there appear to be two major kinds of evaluation in place, each being an integral part of the strategy of national plans articulated through regions and experimental schools by a cadre of facilitators and enablers. There is, first, a series of scientific studies, dependent on sophisticated designs for sampling student performances, notably in French and mathematics, and student reactions to various facets of school life. These designs include the administration and analysis of a large-scale questionnaire which requires teacher co-operation and the production of well structured performance data in the form of regular reports and reviews. The scientific studies are nationally directed and co-ordinated, through the *Service de l'Informatique de Gestion et des Statistiques*, and with the participation of each of the regional academies. These are broadly similar to such performance reviews as the American National Assessment of Educational Progress and the British Assessment of Performance Unit. Whilst they can plot performance trends over time, it is not clear that such studies can pinpoint the role in performance trends of specific innovations or that they can satisfactorily explain the relationships between performance and the conditions of home and community life and schooling.

A second form of evaluation, less scientific in the narrower sense than the first, is required if conclusions are to be drawn about the changes being achieved through specific reform measures or the problems such measures are throwing up. This style of evaluation relies on the informed judgement of experienced educational practitioners and it is capable of pursuing individual and idiosyncratic issues in depth. The key in many national education systems is the inspectorate and such is the case in France. The inspectorate produces reports for internal circulation and is able to offer interpretations, explanations and judgements that are of direct use in policy decisions. Its interpretations of the scientific data of the surveys, combined with its impressions of "how things are going" regionally and locally, are of crucial importance. It seems to us that the inspectors, of all commentators, are best placed to offer judicious and comprehensive evaluations of the successes, shortcomings, difficulties and problems of the renovation.

The evaluative role of the inspectorate calls for two additional comments. In order to carry it forward the inspectorate needs to maintain objectivity and balance and not to become too embroiled and therefore partisan in the operation of the experimental projects even while retaining its animateur role. Our second observation is that the kind of evaluation we have referred to is consistent with a trend in several OECD countries, whereby the inspectorate is moving away from its inquisitional and supervisory roles in respect of individual schools and teachers towards the strategic analysis of trends in large parts of the system. A good illustration of what we mean here is the series of surveys by the United Kingdom Inspectorate (H.M.I.) on primary and secondary education, the annual reviews of the effects of the government's expenditure policies and studies of local education authorities. All of these reports, incidentally, are published.

There is one other aspect of evaluation to which our attention was drawn by teachers in a very lively experimental school. It is the question of teacher or school self-evaluation. From the standpoint of national and regional policy-makers and administrators, information about the performance of the education system as a whole is essential. Focused studies, evaluating specific changes are part of this but they may be, and usually are, of the kind where attention is concentrated on the contents and effects of the changes in question. The performance of teachers is often included and, eventually, information that may be of use to them filters back to the teachers. There are many weak points in this cycle insofar as the improvement of teacher performance is concerned. To mention but two, many teachers never become part of this information loop and the appraisals of teachers, whether direct or indirect, are external to the teacher with a real prospect of alienating him or her.

Teacher and school self-evaluation rest on another set of assumptions altogether: the teachers individually and corporately are the primary educators; teachers are interested in improving their own performance and respond well to invitations and advice about self or peer appraisal; information gained in and about the school environment can be put to direct use in that environment. Other arguments about teacher and school self-evaluation are current in the growing literature on this subject. Our concern here is not to elaborate those arguments but to point to the value of strengthening that part of the evaluation programme which directly involves teachers. There is a possibility and a challenge for in-service education which, like the overall strategy for the reform, would benefit from a shift in responsibility towards the college itself.

Finally, we should like to say a small word about the actual and practical role of educational research. There appears to be very little basic research taking place at the universities or elsewhere. In its absence, can any renovation strategy succeed? Are there no lessons to be learnt from research findings in other countries?

CONCLUSIONS

Renovation is distinct from reform

We have already suggested that there are three major options with regard to the future of the collèges. The first option is sweeping since it would entail abandoning the reform as at present conceived on the grounds of its inadequacy or insufficiency. That option is neither politically feasible nor intrinsically warranted. We see nothing to question in the declared objectives of the renovation which are socially just, pedagogically desirable and entirely relevant to the economic and technological needs of France. The difficulties surround their operational pursuit. We would advocate, therefore, the adoption of a combination of the two other options, that is, the introduction of supplementary measures and rescheduling of the time-table for reform as part of a recasting of the parameters.

The idea of a renovation strategy seems to us sound given that it is taken to mean continuing or rolling implementation and review. We do not challenge the goals and outlines of required structures and processes as at present defined but we do wonder whether the renovation movement is being as effective as it could be. Problems arise over four key aspects:

i) The strategy is still predicated on a grand macro design that is proving difficult to apply at the micro level, not least because it carries forward many assumptions and values that are currently under challenge.

ii) There is ambivalence over the roles and responsibilities of the collèges themselves.

iii) There is a lack of clarity over key roles, notably those of principals, classroom teachers and inspectors.

iv) The exact nature and place of technology studies and vocational preparation in the curriculum remain unclear.

In our view, the best renovation strategy is to adopt a collège-based developmental model, treating collège action as the key to implementation within the broad national framework of the reform. However, even this strategy can only succeed if a number of current issues can be resolved.

Homogeneity and heterogeneity

Grouping according to academic ability seems to us just as discriminatory in its effects as grouping according to subjects. Errors occur in either case and the effects can be very damaging to the performance and self-esteem of those who most need support and encouragement. It is all a question of intent and conviction. In the last resort it is clear vision and pragmatic recognition of the wider cultural and political significance of any structural system that will determine its effectiveness rather than pedagogical techniques, these always being multi-purpose according to convictions and expectations. We found it exceedingly difficult to be sure just what vision informs this very important matter of student grouping in the comprehensive school (9).

There appears to be a lack of clarity concerning ability and subject grouping. The distinction is not always clear in the minds of the educational actors and it is obvious that collèges can slide easily from the first into the second without realising it. This is particularly true when the primary factor taken into account is the rate of development and therefore level of understanding of each student.

It is doubtful whether the present objectives and content of general education are appropriate for the entire age cohort given that the intention is to identify, diagnose and respond to the differences among students. If the purpose is to give all students a common learning experience and a genuinely equal opportunity to develop their personalities, should not the subject matter and activities proposed, and the methods chosen to relate to the actual world, be so flexible as to hold the interest of students whose aptitudes and social backgrounds are necessarily diverse? There is, moreover, a serious problem to be addressed in the design of what might serve as a common curriculum, given the necessity for differentiation with respect to differences in student abilities and interests. Is it not essential to assess achievement according to individual differences? But if this is acknowledged, what implications does it have for the content of learning and the technology of assessment? More consideration of how differentiation necessarily affects subject matter, programmes and assessment, as well as methods, is doubtless called for.

Participation in the renovation process

The reality appears to be that the *collèges* volunteering for renovation are precisely those where the students are experiencing the most serious learning difficulties and where the traditional curriculum does not match their motivations or capacities. A double risk is therefore at stake: on the one hand, *collèges* whose students are performing satisfactorily will remain uninterested in renovation; on the other hand, the successful experiences of *collèges* undergoing the renovation are scarcely likely to be replicated.

That leads us to pose the problem of the choice of schools for renovation and the way their proposed innovations are perceived by parents and students. It would be useful to be able to refer to frames of reference for innovating projects, indicating the various types of objectives and actions undertaken, so that the full range of proposals may be established and the strategies adopted to implement them may subsequently be evaluated.

A stable, structured and integrated renovation of the *collèges* necessarily entails synchronisation and coordination of many activities that must interact and sustain and influence one another. This means that the variety of measures to be adopted must be appropriately balanced in respect of:

i) individual choice and school autonomy on the one side and a common purpose on the other;

ii) continuous interplay between general objectives and collège-level policies, the results obtained and the lessons acquired from a problem-solving approach;

iii) the need to ensure harmonization of the various resources and factors involved: among teachers with different status, between subjects and *la vie scolaire*, documentation and information centres, school advisors, in-service training and so forth;

iv) correction and adjustment within a closed-circuit system of the objectives pursued and programmes undertaken.

It seems to us that coordination is hard to achieve in practice precisely because of the intervention of so many institutions: the General Inspectorate, the Regional Inspectorates, the Inspectors of the Académies, Technical Inspectors, Specialists and Advisors concerned with technology and with teacher training, and the groups of seconded teachers at departmental level charged with piloting the renovation. To these we must add the Inspectorate for Administration and the administration of the Directorate for the *Collèges*, not to speak of the roles of INRP (*Institut National de Recherche Pédagogique*) and CNDP (*Centre National de Documentation Pédagogique)* and their decentralised operations.

Decision-making and the circulation of information is located and must take place at the three main levels: collège, rectorat and ministry. At the same time, vertical communications are required from the ministry through to the collèges and vice versa. At each level there must be internal and external negotiations if consensus and a powerful mobilisation of resources are to be achieved.

Teachers and parents appear to coexist in an uneasy relationship. Relations between the representative organisations -- unions and parents -- are seemingly complex both at the national and local level. Against this background the Directorate for the Collèges and the Rectors cannot alone guarantee conceptual clarity and coordinated action. One solution might be to create ad hoc committees that could meet regularly to permit an exchange of views and to review progress.

Leadership

We have the impression that there is a certain lack of direction within individual collèges due not to any lack of interest or capability in the collèges themselves but to uncertain relations between the individual institution and the wider apparatus of educational decision-making. The staff experiencing renovation search everywhere but unsystematically for answers to their particular problems. Evidently they require better indicators or instruments for knowing how well they are performing and in what ways they ought to modify their aims, approaches and methods. To this end, it would be valuable, through the in-service training programmes at the level of the académies, to draw comparative lessons about the experiences of several collèges with a view to building a framework which, though allowing for diversity, could serve as a model for all the collèges to refer to. There is undoubtedly a reserve of talent and experience to draw upon in the collèges themselves and the need is to find ways both of releasing and harnessing the qualities already available.

Evaluation, research, and future developments

Relating to each objective the outcomes of all the internal and external actions undertaken is a long and time-consuming operation, calling for firm coordination. The process of renovation is not pre-determined once for all but is organic -- a response to a constant interchange between actions on the one side and reflexion and research on the other. The need for evaluation is paramount therefore within each collège, each academy and at the national level so that objectives may be reconsidered and modified as appropriate. This does not at all imply introducing a top-heavy system of evaluation, but ensuring that all the key actors at every level are consciously assuming responsibility for evaluating the effects of their own interventions.

The renovation process inevitably affects the CPPN and the CPA when their programmes are offered within the collèges. However, it does not seem to affect the LEP. In our view, this is regrettable since LEPs receive students from the second collège year, who may have come from a collège experiencing renovation, and from 1983 they have had the power to offer collège certificates (brevets). Since our visit a decision has been taken to accompany collège renovation with a new role for the third- and fourth-year experimental classes of the LEP, Mr. Chevènement declaring that the two programmes are perfectly complementary and inseparable.

From a research and development standpoint it would be fruitful to ascertain what the experience acquired in the CPPN, CAP and LEP of dealing with low-achieving pupils can bring to bear on practice in the collèges. This might provide either an alternative to the primary objective of renovation (ensuring that all students leaving the *collèges* have followed virtually the same curriculum) or a set of approaches (types of activity, programmes and pedagogical methods) which might be included in the offerings of a future *collège* model more comprehensive than the present one.

Certainly, there appears to be scope, both in the short and medium term, for taking into account the capacity of the LEP to absorb more students and their hard-won experience of dealing with students who have learning problems. Their students constitute about 25 per cent of the age cohort and it is unlikely, even on the most optimistic estimate, that the "collèges rénovés" could absorb such a large intake within a dozen years or so.

It is reassuring that the authorities now intend to include the LEP in the renovation campaign. For our part, we would caution against conducting the renovation process along two parallel lines and recommend rather that the two institutions should be fully integrated. Such an integration could aim at pooling the information and experience essential for basing selection for the LEP on positive factors rather than on *collège* failure. In other words, selection should be based on what a pupil can do rather than on what he cannot do.

Curricular integration of the *collèges* and the LEP could be accompanied by measures to enlarge the equivalences between the certification systems in the LEP and the *collèges*. It might also be advisable to consider new measures to be applied by administrators and inspectors in order to foster pedagogical integration.

La vie scolaire

Essential elements in the renovation process -- documentation and information centres, the work of educational counsellors, *ad hoc* collège-based activities -- are at risk of remaining marginal in a system largely focused on cognitive outcomes. We see enormous potential in the concept and practice of *la vie scolaire*. This implies that a new balance must be established between two objectives: i) a major in-service training effort designed to change the behaviour and methods of teachers; ii) a major support effort (the documentation centres were not operational in all the *collèges* that we visited). For it is essential to provide highly-qualified and motivated teachers and a strong material basis if the differential pedagogy that is the fundamental pre-condition of renovation or transformation is to operate to good effect.

In conclusion, we wish to reiterate that there is a strong case for generating much more applied educational research related to the aims and problems of the *collèges*.

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4. Article in *La Vie Lyonnaise*, October 1984.

5. See, in particular, his comment to the Club de la Presse d'Europe 1, *Le Monde*, 8 January 1985.

6. Press Conference on the *Collèges* of 1 February 1983.

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IV

UNITED KINGDOM: SCOTLAND

by

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THE SETTING

Scotland has a reputation for caring deeply about education and deservedly so. Men of learning [university professors, rectors (hereinafter called headteachers), teachers] have been held traditionally in considerable esteem and treated with deference. Education through school and the universities, which in Scotland are as great in reputation as they are in age, has historically given access to the learned professions, law, medicine and the Church. The Scots have always taken pride in the capacity of the pre-comprehensive school system to provide educational opportunities to young people of humble origins but with great academic ability. Small parish schools and their communities would take considerable care to foster the talents of gifted pupils and in later years the success of these pupils would bring honour to the school and its community. Today many of them are to be found among the ranks of H.M. Inspectorate and headteachers. It is now said by some that the importance of the "lad o' pairts" syndrome has been exaggerated and certainly it is true that the numbers of young men who succeeded were relatively small, not to mention the fact that "lasses o' pairts" have had the same access and same financial support throughout this century, though, for several reasons, they have not taken the same advantage of them. However, this tradition enshrines a commitment to academically able pupils whatever their social background, and, as we shall argue below, it may well have eased the transition to the comprehensive school.

Well before the advent of compulsory schooling, parish and burgh schools had been established in addition to schools run by voluntary bodies. There was not a coherent system of provision, however, and some young people received no schooling at all.

The Elementary Education Act of 1872 inaugurated mandatory schooling for all children between the ages of five and thirteen (later fourteen) and a national system of primary education. School Boards were set up in every parish and burgh and the Scottish Department of Education was created to control and coordinate the local systems.

Secondary education for all developed more slowly than primary education. It was not until 1936 that the Education (Scotland) Act formally described all post-primary school education as secondary. Subsequently, the Education (Scotland) Act of 1946 raised the compulsory leaving age to fifteen and young people followed either senior secondary courses of five or six years' duration or junior secondary courses of three years' duration.

In 1972 the school leaving age was prolonged to sixteen. Since that time, moreover, there has been a strong tendency for young people to stay in school in increasing numbers beyond the age of 16. This is not only due to the sheer lack of employment but to the lack of suitable jobs and the desire of young people, encouraged by their parents, for a longer period of initial education.

In common with most countries Scotland integrates mentally and physically handicapped children in the regular schools. Only children with severe impairments are detached to special schools.

Scottish children today spend eleven years in compulsory school. The statutory starting age is five and a good number of infants attend a pre-primary or nursery school beforehand. The primary school cycle extends over seven years. The compulsory secondary cycle (lower secondary education) covers four years. However, an increasing number of young people spends a total of five or six years at the secondary level. It is useful to note that the primary annual stages are designated P (primary) 1 to 7 and the secondary annual stages are designated S (secondary 1 to 6). We shall ourselves use these convenient notations.

ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE

Scotland has a single, uniform system of education. As our interlocutors frequently informed us, with modest satisfaction, it is also small in size. Scottish educationists believe that it is more homogeneous and therefore more manageable than large systems. Civil servants, nationally and regionally based inspectors, advisors, training college staff, local authority officials, headteachers and teachers know one another remarkably well and as a rule collaborate harmoniously. Regular meetings and conferences at the regional and national level help to reinforce mutual understanding, to disseminate new ideas and to introduce many common practices into schools.

Direct provision of schooling is legally the responsibility of local education authorities in keeping with a tradition that schools should be managed at the local level. At the same time, the Scottish Education Department wields substantial administrative and financial powers. The result is that the education system falls about halfway between being centralised and decentralised. There is a great deal of uniformity in the scale and quality of provision and classroom practice but much latitude for local authority initiatives and for diversity in individual schools and classrooms.

Public education is financed from two sources: grants from the central Exchequer and local sources (rates). The proportion from central grants now constitutes about 60 per cent of the total expenditure. Within narrow limits there is not much difference in local authority expenditures per capita, though there are some major differences in the way funds are applied and in their cost effectiveness.

We received no indication that the local authorities feel constrained by the block grant system. A lack of adequate resources has not been an inhibiting factor in their implementation of comprehensive education.

In the short time available we were able to visit only a few schools. Nevertheless, on the basis of what we saw for ourselves, what we were told and what we have verified from the plentiful documentation available, we have gained the impression that in general the Scottish lower secondary school does not lack for resources. Overall staffing levels appear to be good. The schools we visited looked attractive, were well planned and contained much equipment. We learnt that, nationally, 40 per cent of schools already have qualified librarians and that eventually there will be a librarian in each school. Apparently, the serious accommodation problems arising from comprehensivisation that one local authority referred to had been successfully overcome. In this authority only a few of the schools are custom built, all-through comprehensive schools but the rest have all been modernised to an acceptable standard by well-planned extensions to and adaptations of existing buildings. At the time of our visit, teachers appeared to be broadly content with their terms of service and conditions of work. (Since then, however, state schools have been affected by a prolonged industrial dispute, related to a complex set of issues, of which teachers' pay is a primary factor. We are in no position to comment upon the effects of that dispute.)

THE REFORM PROCESS

Educational reform is introduced by gradual or cyclical stages and only with general consent. Ministers of whatever political persuasion are usually carried along by consensus. (Cf."It is believed that the curriculum policy described represents a consensus of educational and public opinion at the present time" -- CDE/9/12/1983 Curriculum Design at S3 and S4 -- Guidelines for Headteachers). Thus, the comprehensive school model was widely adopted as a reflection of the philosophy of the Labour Party. Nevertheless, on returning to political power Conservative administrations have accepted the model and reveal no inclination to restore selective schools.

The style of national policy-making is essentially pragmatic. Ministers respond to new demands, that mainly arise from within the educational world, when they appear justified on educational grounds and are financially realistic. The major constraint on the pursuit of new goals is the availability of adequate resources. Local authorities also proceed pragmatically and through conciliation. They act through guidelines and not by fiat.

A recent feature of the reform process is the conscious management of development. In the past, changes were formally introduced and then left to take their own course. Today, however, it is felt necessary to monitor the progress of reforms and to make appropriate adjustments wherever unforeseen obstacles or unintended consequences emerge. Fine-tuning is perhaps too strong a phrase to describe the actual strategy but there appears to be no doubt that the machinery for control and management of reform has become progressively more sophisticated and flexible within the past decade. The new approach to reform and the methods used to manage development are not only very significant for the establishment of the lower secondary comprehensive school, which is the focus of the present report, but for the entire school system. Thus, changes at one level soon reveal the need for corresponding changes at other levels. Scotland, it seems, is now embarked on a continuous process of appraisal that will entail the emphasis constantly shifting from one sector to another and from one problem to another.

The pursuit of consensus is both determined and relatively smooth. Much is explained by the traditional autonomy of the teacher in the classroom and the traditional public respect for education to which we have already referred. Teachers appear to feel less threatened by change than in many other education systems, mainly because they are given the opportunity to participate in the innovatory process.

The essentially homogeneous composition of the Scottish people and the continuing public esteem for education are also important factors in facilitating change. Believing implicitly that education is instrinsically valuable and in responsible hands, most people appear to assume that any proposed changes have been carefully considered and will turn out for the best. The strongest criticism comes from within the system and from the educational press.

Consensus in the comprehensive school reform has been further assured thanks to the contribution of the Consultative Committee on the Curriculum (CCC) and the Scottish Examination Board (SEB). The Committee represents a variety of professional interests and operates through a number of subject sub-committees. It is thus plainly an expert body.

The Examination Board amply reflects professional interests. Of its 38 members, 33 are nominated by educational agencies and 5 by the Secretary of State, including the Chairman. For each subject examined there are subject panels consisting of specialists, including teachers, college of education and university teachers, and representatives of the Inspectorate. All this ensures a high degree of professional commitment and agreement throughout the country.

Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools in Scotland play a major role not only in the periodic assessment of school performance but in initiating and implementing educational change especially with a view to encouraging parallel progress throughout the country. It is to be noted that there are 113 Scottish inspectors serving a population of 5 millions, not a great number but enough to ensure a substantial impact. The Inspectorate operates as the professional arm of the Scottish Education Department. It derives its considerable influence from being statutorily independent, the high quality of its intake and the intimacy of its links with the education community. We shall be returning later on to the crucial role played by the Inspectorate in lower secondary reform.

Complementing the stimulative and coordinating role of the national Inspectorate is the role of specialised advisors -- including seconded teachers -- appointed by the local authorities. In most regions the advisory service is strong. Advisors provide a link between nationally-inspired initiatives and their adoption in the schools, liaise between primary and secondary schools, give advice on the teaching of specific subjects, and help foster general guidance and counselling facilities. We gained the impression from the few areas visited that they exercise an influence well out of proportion to their relatively small numbers.

Finally, we should mention the use of steering groups and working parties, set up within local education authorities, to identify problems, to make proposals for improvement and to devise implementation and development strategies.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE COMPREHENSIVE SECONDARY SCHOOL

Secondary education in Scotland takes the form of a 2 + 2 + 2 system, the first four years constituting compulsory lower secondary education and the last two years upper secondary education. At the age of twelve pupils enter secondary education, the first two years of which (S1 and S2) are relatively undifferentiated in terms of content and methods of grouping. During the next two years (S3 and S4), pupils are differentiated into certificate courses, leading to the award of the Ordinary grade certificate at 16, and into non-certificate courses. Those who remain at school beyond the statutory leaving age enter S5 and S6 principally to pursue courses leading to the award of the UC grade certificate and the Certificate of Sixth Year Studies.

The provision of secondary schooling in Scotland in fact had been strongly affected by the concentration of the population into the industrialised urban areas of Stratchclyde, the Central Region, Lothian and Fife. In these areas 1945 saw the introduction of junior secondary schools (three-year courses) and senior secondary schools (five-year courses leading to the UC leaving certificate). Much of the rest of the country is rural, and many areas, especially in the north and on the islands, are sparsely populated. The distribution of the population inhibited the same development. In rural areas the pupil population was simply far too small to create separate selective secondary schools; here, all pupils completed their secondary education in a common establishment, the so-called "omnibus" school.

The introduction of comprehensive education in 1965 was thus easily accepted in these areas, since no major structural innovations were entailed. Scottish educationists are wont to remind their interviewers that their country has always had comprehensive schools in small towns. It was not a question, therefore, of having to introduce a novel type of institution against a gale of formal opposition or even ideological controversy. As it happened, the political will in many urban areas made the necessary changes there also relatively easy to accomplish. There are no distinctions made on religious grounds, though education is commonly segregated by religion, and the position of the independent schools has not given rise to any public controversy.

In 1965 the distribution of secondary schools in Scotland was as follows:

	Schools (%)	Pupils (%)
Selective schools (certificate only)	10	22
Selective schools (non-certificate only)	45	19
Comprehensive schools	20	34
Part selective/part comprehensive	24	24

In 1965 local education authorities were asked to submit schemes for re-organisation along comprehensive lines. By 1967 all had submitted schemes which were approved wholly or in part. The new United Kingdom government of 1970 no longer sought to impose any particular form of secondary education but in practice this made no difference to Scottish secondary schools. Three of the indispensable criteria for comprehensivisation were adopted: neighbourhood schools; no selection for entry; no early sharp differentiation according to ability.

Several other factors eased the transition. Immediately beforehand, the Scottish senior secondary school had a much larger intake than the English grammar school (some 35 per cent as against some 20 per cent). Moreover, the introduction of an Ordinary grade certificate at S4 in 1962 led very quickly to large numbers of pupils remaining at the junior secondary school for an additional year in order to obtain this highly-valued public award for 16 year olds. Since many junior secondary school pupils were successful in the Ordinary grade examinations, which were designed for the top 35 per cent in the senior secondary school, it was soon recognised that the selective system was not working satisfactorily.

Perhaps as important as anything, however, was the fact that, although the division of the secondary sector into junior and senior schools in 1945 was essentially bipartite, there had existed from soon thereafter a deep commitment to the concept of the common school. In 1947, the report of the Advisory Council on Education, Secondary Education, still regarded as an important and prescient document, made this commitment explicit:

> We have taken account of the tripartite organisation of secondary education proposed for England, with grammar, technical and modern schools equal in status and amenities but clearly differentiated in function ... Apart from any question of distribution of population we consider that there are decisive reasons against its adoption in Scotland ... even if the tripartite scheme were wholly feasible, is it educationally desirable ? If education is much more than instruction, is in fact life and preparation for life, can it be wisdom thus to segregate from an early age ? On the contrary, we hold that school becomes colourful, rich and rewarding just in proportion as the boy who reads Homer, the boy who makes wireless sets and the boy without marked aptitude for either are within its living unity a constant stimulus and

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> supplement to one another.. *the omnibus secondary school best embodies the ideals of the new age*: and, except where impracticable, we prefer it to any other types of organisation. *And by an omnibus school we mean one which accepts all the post-primary pupils of a community or of a given area* (our italics). Such a school embraces the whole range of secondary education, not in time only but in diversity of courses and provision for different intelligence levels, from the highest down to that at which the pupil ceases to find a place in the normal school... Briefly, the case for the omnibus school is that this is the natural way for a democracy to order the post-primary schooling of a given area: that it escapes many of the disadvantages attaching to other forms of organisation; that it mitigates, though it does not wholly solve, the vexatious problem of selection and grading; and that, better than any other plan, it promotes the success of the school as a community. (*Secondary Education*, para. 140, 143 and 164).

This conception has remained strong in the minds of many of those with power and influence in the field of education in subsequent years. And to such people, as we have already observed, parents and the general public have been ready to defer over many matters of educational policy.

It is often held that, at least in comparison with England and Wales, there is also in Scotland a strong tradition of providing a deliberately broad secondary education. This is undoubtedly true at the level of upper secondary education, but the belief is sometimes questioned for lower secondary education. Indeed, Professor N. Grant of Glasgow University has argued that not only is the curriculum at this level narrower than in England, but that it is also one of the narrowest in Europe because it concentrates very heavily on academic knowledge and skills. Doubtless in the past this served the best interests of the exceptional pupil, but it is argued that such a specialised curriculum contributed to the high rates of alienation, absenteeism and early leaving during the 1960s and 1970s. For our part, we found that every pupil entering secondary education took English, Mathematics, a foreign language, Science, History, Geography or Social Subjects, Technical Education and Home Economics, Art, Music, Physical Education and Religious Education. The problem seems to have been, and may well still remain in certain schools, not a lack of breadth in the curriculum but the narrow treatment of subjects.

SCHOOL AND CLASS SIZE

Neither school nor class size has been a dominant factor pleading in favour of comprehensive schools. Secondary schools in Scotland are today of various sizes, though really small schools have now disappeared. We visited one school that had recently reached a peak of 2 000 pupils. The smaller schools that remain are mostly located in remote areas. There appear to be no set ideas about the optimum size for a comprehensive school, size being determined in practice by location and demographic considerations. The Pack Committee (see below) wondered whether there was any correlation between school size and the incidence of vacancy and indiscipline but had to recognise that "there is a lack of conclusive evidence in support of any particular size". At the same time, the Committee confessed its "unease about the potential of large institutions to generate large problems" and suggested "that the topic of the best size of schools ... deserve[d] further study".

It was claimed by one local authority spokesman that a school with 420 pupils could offer as wide a curricular choice as a very large school. The critical factor was the versatility of individual teachers and their ability to teach children rather than subjects. It was also pointed out to us that the traditional undergraduate degree pattern in Scotland -- that is, a four-year course covering several subjects -- enabled graduate teachers to teach two subjects effectively.

As to class size there is no standardised pupil/teacher ratio. The normal maximum class size permitted is 33 in S1-2 and 30 in S3-4. In all practical classes the maximum is 20. At the same time, we were informed that no class is allowed to be "too large". The national pupil/teacher ratio of 14.5 to 1 is favourable by international standards. In one authority that we visited the ratio was 14 to 1; in another, the average class size was 25 for S1-2 and 19-20 for S3-4.. Naturally, there are sharp variations according to the subjects being taught.

TRULY COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOLS

The structure of the comprehensive school was, then, established in Scotland, by comparison with some other countries and especially with England and Wales, smoothly and quickly. Yet the formal ending of selection at the age of 12 and the provision of a common school for all pupils between the ages of 12 and 16 was not, in the eyes of many Scots, sufficient for the creation of a truly comprehensive school. The structural reform had been successfully accomplished, but the internal functioning of the schools had failed to adapt to the new circumstances; there was little sense of the need for dynamic change. Between late 1974 and early 1975 three national committees were accordingly appointed to deal with truancy and indiscipline (the Pack Committee, 1974), with the curriculum in S3 and S4 (the Munn Committee, 1975), and with assessment and certification (the Dunning Committee, 1974). All three committees published their reports in 1977.

These committees represented a response to the widely recognised problems of the comprehensive schools and the necessity of moving curriculum development to centre stage. Although pupils followed a common course of study in the first year and, for the most part, in the second year, pupils in S3 and S4 were usually divided into "certificate" and "non-certificate" types. In other words, within the common school at S3 and S4 some pupils followed courses of study directed to the Ordinary grade certificate at 16 whereas the rest spent these last two years at school without the incentive of striving for a final certificate. For this latter group some schools made valiant efforts to provide a suitable course; others did not. In the latter, the non-certificate pupils were all too often not provided with an appropriate curriculum and as a result some considered themselves to be failures, rejected by the school, and responded to their education with boredom, alienation and truancy. Moreover, increasing importance was being placed on the

Ordinary grade examinations, by pupils and parents as well as by teachers, largely because they constituted marketable qualifications in the world of work. By the late 1970s three-quarters of the secondary school population at S4 were being presented for one or more Ordinary grade examinations, even though these examinations had been designed for the top third of the pupil population.

The Munn Report recommended a broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils during the last two years of compulsory education. It suggested that during the years of S3 and S4 all pupils should be provided with courses of study embodying what was defined as eight "modes of activity" encompassing the essential areas of learning which all pupils should experience throughout the period of compulsory schooling. In effect, the Munn Report directed attention to the need for a comprehensive curriculum to underpin the structural comprehensive school. These "modes of activity" were defined as: the linguistic and the literary; the mathematical; the scientific; the social; the creative and aesthetic; the physical; the religious; the moral. The Report did not regard these "modes of activity" as coterminous with particular school subjects. However, the effect of the Report was to propose that all pupils should follow courses in English, Mathematics, Physical Education, and Religious and Moral Education. In addition, pupils must select one subject in the social studies area (History, Geography, Modern Studies, or Economics), one science, (Biology, Chemistry, Physics, General Science, Engineering Science, or Food Science) and one aesthetic subject (Art, Music, Drama or Dance). By this method all pupils would be involved in all the "modes of activity" while still being accorded some freedom of choice. Finally, pupils should be presented with an "elective area" for unconstrained choice where they could pursue courses not provided in the basic area (e.g. Secretarial Studies or Modern Languages) as well as additional subjects already represented in the basic area (e.g. an additional science or aesthetic subject). In short, all pupils would pursue a comprehensive curriculum defined by the eight "modes of activity" while still being permitted at least some free choice and specialisation.

In essence, the Dunning committee recommended the possibility of certification for all pupils in S4. Subject syllabuses spanning the whole ability range should be differentiated into three levels of award: Foundation (the lowest level), General, and Credit (the highest level). Each syllabus leading to certification should have internally and externally devised and assessed components, and these should be similar over all three levels within a subject. Overlapping syllabus levels were regarded as essential to avoid the premature categorisation of pupils in S3. By such flexibility and overlap, too early and too sharp a differentiation between pupils could be avoided. Pupils performing well in the Foundation course should be awarded a grade at the General level. However, outstanding performance in the General level should not be awarded a Credit grade.

The Pack Committee could not fail to take a much wider view of the role of the school than its remit prescribed, especially as it was admonished not to 'review the decision to raise the school-leaving age", despite the fact that truancy and indiscipline affected the S3 and S4 more than the S1 and S2 years. In fact, the Committee unsurprisingly identified the same problems that Munn and Dunning were invited to address and anticipated some of these two Committees' proposals. As the Pack Committee hoped, there is no significant incompatibility between its proposals on the school system and theirs. We should only like to comment that the Committee's report treats issues of great concern to many OECD countries and that its chapter on "Guidance, Social Work and Child Guidance" is notably enlightening.

Put very simply, then, the effect of the Munn and Dunning proposals would be this: all pupils would follow a comprehensive curriculum, defined in terms of the eight "modes of activity", throughout the period of compulsory schooling ; and all pupils would be offered the possibility of certification at the age of 16. In 1983, after a period of consultation and investigation of feasibility, the government accepted the principles of the Munn and Dunning Reports (with some modifications as we shall see later) and the scheme of implementation after a period of consultation and preliminary work. The first courses were to be introduced in 1984 with certification in 1986.

There has been vocal opposition from a minority on educational grounds. Most of these critics wish to go much further than is at present proposed in the belief that the new system will still be too divisive. Others consider that the system of assessment is still norm- rather than criterion-referenced and oppose the grade-related criteria idea.

Why did the Munn and Dunning principles receive such widespread support in Scotland, not only from the government, but from local authorities, teachers, parents and the general public? This general acceptance requires some explanation since the government lacks the power to impose the reforms. In the Scottish Education Department's Circular 1093 of April 1983 it is stated that:

> The Secretary of State reaffirms the curriculum Policy set out in The Munn and Dunning Reports: The Government's Development Programme in March 1980 and re-stated in "Framework for Decision". That is, all schools _are asked_ to adopt the curriculum framework provided by the 8 modes of study proposed by the Munn Committee. Within that framework, schools and education authorities are in the best position to judge the particular form the curriculum should take in the light of each school's individual circumstances and the needs of its pupils' (italics added).

General acceptance of the Munn proposals by the schools and local authorities (and through them by the general public) is a precondition of their successful implementation.

In our view, there are several reasons for this general acceptance. First, there is a widespread belief that the Munn and Dunning proposals will improve the comprehensive school and help it to cope with the problems which led to the setting up of the committees in the first place. Moreover, the proposals did not emanate from the government itself. The Munn Committee was a sub-committee of the CCC, the advisory body referred to above. Thus, it may be said, the Munn proposals emanated from a group fully conversant with sentiments outside government circles.

Secondly, the Munn proposals accorded well with the tradition of a broad, liberal education in Scotland. Moreover, the underlying philosophy reflects some ideas of the much admired report on _Secondary Education_, which we have quoted above and which is well remembered by most senior inspectors, headteachers and teachers. For instance, that report suggested that subjects should not be thought of or presented as "bodies of ordered knowledge" but as "fields of human endeavour", a concept which anticipates Munn's "modes of activity".

Thirdly, as already pointed out, Scotland is a relatively small country in which the LEAs confer extensively with one another. There is the national inspectorate to guide and monitor educational development and reform; a national curriculum development service; a single examining board. However, local authority consensus is undoubtedly the most weighty factor.

The gradualist approach to reform is further reflected in the use of feasibility studies, which are expected to have the so-called Hawthorn effect, that is, to lead to spontaneous and widespread adoption of successful innovations. Thus, there has been a carefully planned strategy of implementation, with pilot studies in some 20 schools for each of the Foundation level courses in English, Mathematics and Science from 1979, and the extension of this work to some 300 "second line" schools in 1981. The pilot studies have received an enthusiastic reception from the vast majority of teachers and most pupils.

From the beginning, the implementation programme assigned priority to the development of courses at Foundation level. Innovation was directed towards motivating that large group of pupils with whom the teachers were experiencing the most severe problems -- those who hitherto had no formal certification, who were academically less able, and who were most likely to be disaffected and alienated by the last years of compulsory school.

In addition, the government was ready to assign extra resources to the implementation programme, not least to in-service training for teachers, for syllabus construction and changes in teaching methods, and assessment techniques. There was also a very large investment in research related to Munn and Dunning. Thus, the Secretary of State "... recognizes that there will be an extra burden upon teachers during the transitional period... He intends therefore to provide for staffing about 5 per cent to 6 per cent over Red Book (that is, above nationally recommended norms) levels ... as from 1984/5. During the transitional period he will also be willing to consider applications by education authorities for reductions in the secondary school year in order to facilitate in-service training and syllabus development in connection with the implementation programme" (SED Circulars, 1093 of 12 April 1983 and 1107 of 2 December 1983).

The teachers themselves played an active role in these early developments. At first sight the reforms seem to be of a "centre-periphery" type. They are held by many to conform to the "social interaction" model of innovation, though they are strongly steered from the centre through H.M. Inspectorate. Many teachers involved in the pilot studies felt able to contribute their own ideas within a framework constructed more centrally.

The Dunning proposals met with wide acceptance for public certification for all pupils. In particular, this seemed to offer a promise that the academically less able pupils should no longer be seen to be rejected as failures, but should be given a positive attestation of their achievement. The Dunning proposals placed emphasis on criterion-referenced methods of assessment rather than norm-referenced procedures that predestine many candidates to failure.

The Dunning proposals broadened the basis of assessment. The assessment procedures would no longer be so heavily restricted to unseen written tests but would include a strong element of practical, applied and oral work. It should be borne in mind that the "O" grade in science subjects has not normally included a practical component.

The OECD examiners visited Scotland at a time when the upper levels of lower secondary education were thus in a state of considerable change and development. We detected a note of excitement and enthusiasm in the air which, perhaps inevitably, was also combined with a hint of apprehension and turmoil. Lower secondary education is heavily dominated by the implementation of Munn and Dunning. Only at the end of the decade will it be possible to assess the success with which their proposals have been implemented, and the problems that have arisen from this important programme of reform in curriculum and assessment. A good part of our report is concerned with the implications of Munn and Dunning, though naturally we refer to other issues, including developments in S1-2. In such a period of change our identification of and comments on key issues must necessarily be provisional and tentative.

The Munn and Dunning reports, and the issues arising from them, can be understood and analysed in terms of five conceptual areas which we shall now briefly consider by raising questions, many of which are, incidentally, no less valid for most other OECD countries. The five areas are, of course, closely interconnected and could be treated in terms of a series of axis such as differentiation and assessment.

i) A common curriculum
ii) Differentiation
iii) Assessment and certification
iv) Pedagogy or teaching methods
v) Validity and motivation for all.

A COMMON CURRICULUM

A comprehensive or common school is not achieved merely by bringing all pupils, irrespective of ability, aptitude, interest and social background, into a common school: in addition, all pupils must have access to a common curriculum. The Munn Report solution to this problem is the recommendation that all pupils be exposed to the eight "modes of activity" at all stages of compulsory education.

The critical question, then, is how early should differentiation take place at the lower secondary level? This is, of course, one way of asking how long should pupils be taught in mixed ability classes? Should setting (or ability grouping) take place sooner in some subjects than in others? What are the effects of these different principles of grouping within a common curriculum?

What is the function of the options introduced in S3 and S4? Will the degree of choice and specialisation permitted at this stage generate distinct types of pupil (e.g. an academic group favouring a particular constellation of options and a more vocational group selecting a different constellation of options)? Is this compatible with the philosophy of the Munn Report?

Will the Munn ideas on "modes of activity" soon be submerged by the traditional separation of subjects/disciplines? The examiners were often told, as we have already pointed out, that in Scotland teachers are teachers of subjects. In such circumstances, how can teachers be expected to internalise a philosophy based not on subjects but on "modes of activity"?

How easy might it be to drift away from the ideals of the Munn Report and revert to the more traditional curriculum structure which differentiates pupils more sharply? One of the headteachers interviewed stated that if a pupil showed signs of disaffection he would be willing "exceptionally" to abandon the Munn approach. It will, in practice, be very easy for headteachers to dilute the Munn philosophy in this way, since, as we shall point out below, they have extensive autonomy and powers within their schools.

DIFFERENTIATION

The common school must recognize at the same time the differences between pupils in ability, aptitude and interest: such differences must be catered for by the common school. Thus, although the eight "modes of activity" are mandatory for all pupils, not all pupils will study the same specific curricular content: pupils will be permitted to make choices between subjects, and within groups of subjects (such as Science and Aesthetic subjects), thereby allowing a degree of specialisation in the light of differences between pupils in ability and aspiration.

The central question is what will be the impact of the three Dunning levels, Foundation, General and Credit (F, G and C)? Although the system is designed to be highly flexible, with overlapping syllabuses, will it be possible to maintain this flexibility in practice? The Dunning Report insists that "Overlapping of syllabus levels is essential to avoid the premature categorisation of pupils in S3" (Dunning Report, recommendation 10, p. 90). But this may be very difficult to achieve in the light of Ryrie's research.

> "... the pattern of O Grade results reflected fairly closely the general performance of the students during their second year. For most students the position in which they found themselves at the end of their fourth year followed from the position within the schools' assessment system which they occupied two years earlier."
> (A.C. Ryrie: Routes and Results, Hodder and Stoughton, 1981, p.26).

In other words, will teachers soon come to think of the three levels as three distinct pupil types? Will such types, which are essentially tripartite, threaten both the Dunning proposals and comprehensive principles?

Equally important, how will such pupils be grouped during S3 and S4? In a larger school, for instance, might it now be easy to group a four-class year group into four groups: 1 x C level; 1 x C/G; 1 x G/F; and 1 x F? How much transfer will there be in practice between the three levels? When will the decision be taken about a pupil's level for examination purposes? Might it be as early as the beginning of S3, or might it be as late as immediately before the examination?

PEDAGOGY

The comprehensive school must develop a range of teaching methods appropriate to all levels of ability and aspiration, methods which will generate both high motivation and high achievement. Pedagogical issues are largely neglected by the Munn and Dunning reports. As we have suggested, the underlying assumption has been that if assessment can be put right, then the rest will fall into place. On this occasion a number of changes in pedagogy in the Scottish comprehensive school are being engineered indirectly by making important innovations in the system of assessment and certification. The Scots have understood well the most effective mechanism for changing teaching methods: if one changes the form of the assessment, the teaching profession will change their teaching methods when this is necessary for pupils to achieve under the revised assessment arrangement. The fact remains that important pedagogical problems remain to be solved.

The central question is whether each pupil will receive the necessary help to fulfil his or her learning potential given that the abilities and aptitudes of each pupil are different. We shall take up the problem of individual learning difficulties in a section below.

A continuing problem in many schools is that the pupils meet too many teachers mainly because there are too many short periods. One solution being adopted in some schools, which we endorse, is to lengthen the periods allocated to each subject so that the contact with a given teacher can be prolonged. Another solution is to deal with a given topic intensively, say, in History or Geography, through a module or block of time.

ASSESSMENT AND CERTIFICATION

All pupils have a right to regular assessment and public certification of their achievements by the end of compulsory schooling. Thus the Dunning Report replaced the O grade designed for 30-35 per cent of the pupil population with a certificate differentiated into three overlapping levels, Foundation, General and Credit.

The examination system is still predicated on selection for the top 30 per cent whereas, in reality, 70 to 80 per cent of the age group present themselves for examination. Munn and Dunning represent an attempt to iron out or solve problems arising from an unreformed examination system. They could not deal with that system, however, without also dealing with the curriculum. What is sought is essentially an assessment-led change.

Most teachers and headteachers desire change. They are not happy with the current mode of assessment which still continues to label pupils simply according to their academic ability. In general, they approve of the Dunning proposals and are prepared to use assessment as a means of motivating pupils by showing how far they have succeeded rather than the extent to which they have failed.

How sustained will the innovation at F level be? Will the early developments be subject to a Hawthorne effect? Will the enthusiasm fade as the innovation spreads to the "third line" schools? Will the emphasis on internal assessment at F level maintain teacher commitment?

Will the emphasis on practical/applied/oral work in the new assessment procedures effectively change the teachers' pedagogy from the dominant mode of didactic teaching? Will the separation of pupils in S3 and S4 for the different levels, F, G, and C, lead teachers to revert to didactic modes in place of the individualised methods used in mixed ability classes in S1 and S2?

Dunning proposed internal and external forms of assessment at each level. The government has decided (circular 1093, paragraph 3) that the Foundation level should be assessed by a combination of internal and external measures, but most general and all Credit-level courses will be largely assessed by external measures. To what extent will this sharpen the differentiation between the levels and influence people's perception of them? Will employers recognize the validity of F-level awards for the labour market? If they do not, will this affect pupil motivation to work for F-level awards? Will the huge expansion of certification make most of the schools' teaching examination directed? Will non-examined work be given any importance by teachers/pupils? Will the tension between criterion-referenced and norm-referenced tests be resolved? Will the system revert to one which is, at heart, a norm-referenced system?

VALIDITY AND MOTIVATION FOR ALL

In Scotland a cardinal reason for going comprehensive was to reduce the achievement gap between more gifted and less gifted children, not by ignoring the needs of the former but by giving the latter the same opportunity to complete secondary education.

A report on The Education of Pupils with Learning Difficulties in Primary and Secondary Schools, prepared by the Inspectorate, was published in 1978. It presented in its own words "A composite picture of the activities and encounters a pupil with learning difficulties might experience as he moves through the primary and secondary school system" and showed that "a whole range of problems faces [the pupil] and how these are compounded by pedagogical and organisational difficulties for [the] teachers". It also relied upon an enlightened and flexible interpretation of "learning difficulties" that now colours all Scottish educational thinking on the subject. According to this interpretation nearly all pupils experience at least some difficulty in learning at one or more stages of their school careers and in one or more subjects. There is, indeed, a continuum of learning difficulty with a few pupils at each extreme and a majority of pupils congregated in the middle. The advantage of this approach is twofold: it avoids stigmatising pupils with very severe difficulties; it encourages teachers to look for barriers to learning affecting all their pupils and not just the most manifestly backward. They come to see, that is, that learning difficulties may arise from curricular as well as other causes.

Today, much time and care are devoted to the needs of slow learners, that is, both those who fall behind through absence or some other reason and those who do not learn fast enough. We were struck by the fact that nearly all those whom we interviewed regarded this as a high priority and referred to various methods for assisting low achievers.

The practice of "pulling out" or extracting pupils from the regular classes for remedial instruction has been largely abandoned because it was found to be ineffectual, those being pulled out simply losing further ground vis-à-vis their peer groups. Those still pulled out tend to have really severe learning problems.

In one local authority, we were informed that cooperative or team teaching offered the most effective way of both detecting pupils with difficulties and taking appropriate action. This necessitates the employment of additional staff, of course, and we were interested to note that teachers can usually count upon remedial teaching support and that in most schools there will be a principal remedial teacher. In one zone that we visited there were twelve remedial teachers. This meant that from time to time there would be two teachers in the same classroom. There is a one-year full-time diploma course in learning difficulties at one of the Colleges of Education for the training of remedial teachers.

Diagnostic and remedial procedures are widely in use. It is expected that each teacher will be able quickly to detect pupils with learning problems. For this reason, in the Training Colleges, students are taught how to cope with individual differences and how to deal with pupils with special learning difficulties.

The primary school in Scotland is widely held to be in a steady state and to be pedagogically effective. Nevertheless, as one headmaster pointed out, some primary schools are more successful than others in bringing their pupils up to the appropriate level for transition to the secondary level.

In all education systems, pupils with learning difficulties in the primary school usually find their situation even more fraught when they transfer to the secondary school. In Scotland, there has long been general awareness of an articulation problem between the primary and secondary levels and various devices are being used to overcome it. Headteachers visit their feeder primary schools; assistant headteachers liaise regularly with primary schools; guidance teachers are in contact with primary school staff. More importantly, there is growing realisation that the 10-14 age span, covering P6-7 and S1 and 2, should be seen as a continuous process and therefore that there should be a carefully-phased development of the curriculum over the primary to secondary transition and close collaboration between primary and secondary teachers. The first year in S1 should be seen as a period of settling down in a new environment. One proviso that we should like to mention is the necessity of preserving mixed ability classes in S1 and S2 coupled with keeping together children from the same primary school as long as possible.

As we have stressed, Scottish educators attach the highest priority to serving the needs of pupils with learning difficulties. We heard few references, however, to the needs of the highly gifted, though it must be stressed that these were made at the highest policy-making level. All we can suggest is that there may well be a problem to attend to.

The transition to work or to further education from the lower secondary school is fully recognized as a factor influencing both the curriculum and the work of guidance and counselling. We were impressed by the determination to link the impending reform of the upper secondary school curriculum (action plan for 16-18 year-olds) to the reforms in the lower secondary school and by the care taken to advise pupils on their choice of future careers.

GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING

In 1976 the Scottish Education Department published a progress report by H.M. Inspectors of Schools on Guidance in Scottish Secondary Education, which remains a richly informative introduction to the topic of guidance and counselling. It starts from the premise that "guidance is a function of the school as a whole, and operates throughout the whole period of school education", and points out that the advent of the large and complex comprehensive school placed a premium on guidance. In the schools we visited guidance was interpreted broadly to include helping pupils to make sensible decisions at all stages of schooling, to choose appropriate careers and to solve personal problems. It is seen to be especially important at critical turning points : entry to S1; at the end of S2; during S4. Vocational advice starts from S2.

An impressive effort has been made to train effective guidance and counselling specialists. Special training courses (including a two-year diploma course) are provided for teachers who wish to become guidance specialists and those who qualify receive a responsibility allowance. We were informed that there was initial suspicion of their presence on the part of senior staff and teachers and that roles were in the beginning not always clearly defined. Today, however, it appears that there is complete satisfaction with their activities. Indeed, the satisfaction was seen to be too complete by at least one headteacher since it led subject teachers to feel that they no longer need bother about emotional or other personal problems that might be affecting a pupil's capacity to learn. The aim now, therefore, is to involve all teachers in the guidance process.

TRAINING OF TEACHERS

Secondary school teachers in Scotland are nearly all graduates, possessing either an ordinary or an honours degree. This means that Scotland is not plagued by the curse of several OECD countries of having to deal with teachers with different qualifications from different educational backgrounds and with different financial and instructional terms of service.

The initial professional training of secondary school teachers, after or during university, takes place not in universities (except for the University of Stirling) but in colleges of education. The universities may contribute to the courses but are mostly concerned with postgraduate degrees and educational research. The colleges have been frequently accused of being paternalistic and hidebound in their values and methods. We found firm support for them among educational administrators and headteachers, though a few teachers expressed criticism. Several interlocutors also argued that too much attention and too many resources continued to be devoted to initial training to the detriment of the in-service training that is essential to the implementation of educational reforms. There were also a few complaints that new teachers are inadequately prepared to cope with mixed ability classes. We were also informed that there was a shortage of competent managers.

For teachers in general the advent of the comprehensive school entailed fundamental rethinking of their pedagogical methods. They were used to a long-established tradition of subject-teaching to homogeneous groups. Their main difficulty has been how to cope with mixed ability classes, especially in such subjects as Mathematics and Modern Languages. Teachers in previously selective schools obviously faced the biggest adjustment problem. We ourselves heard contrary opinions about the adaptability of teachers. Thus some people said that teachers had generally responded to the reforms with flexibility and good grace whereas others claimed that many teachers had resisted change, preferring to stick to rigid subject teaching and to purely academic values.

To facilitate adoption of the new reforms, the teaching force is being increased by one per cent and special training courses have been organised. Despite what some critics said, Scotland is also making an exceptional effort to develop in-service training. We noted that an increasing percentage of training college resources is being transferred from initial to in-service training and a spokesman for the Inspectorate talked of the need "to mount an aggressive approach to in-service training", which seemed to us indeed desirable.

In-service training takes place in schools, at the regional level and in the training colleges. Days for training are arranged at the beginning of each school year and periodically on three or four occasions during the year. In one authority we were informed that 3 per cent of the educational budget was allocated to in-service training. As in other countries, it is not easy to persuade those teachers most in need of further training to attend courses. We were also told of the difficulty of getting teachers to teach one another, a practice of great value which, ideally, should be complemented by experienced teachers playing a leading role in guiding students undergoing their initial teaching practice and in helping probationer teachers overcome their initial difficulties.

Many in-service training courses are deliberately geared to the implementation of structural and curricular reforms. The teachers involved are expected to act as pioneers or catalysts for the whole profession. Headteachers and senior staff attend numerous conferences and workshops, many of which include provision for training in management techniques. No doubt there is a case for all teachers to be introduced to the techniques of curricular and subject department management.

ROLES OF HEADTEACHERS

We were constantly made aware of the dominant role of headteachers in secondary schools. Both the Scottish Education Department and the Inspectorate view headteachers as the key actors in the education system and headteachers themselves take their large powers and influence for granted. Not a few of them appear to be unabashed authoritarians. Being powerful individuals, they perceive their roles in different ways. Significantly, increasing attention is being paid to the training of headteachers and a special centre (The Scottish Centre for Studies in School Administration) has been set up at Moray House College of Education in Edinburgh for this purpose.

Headteachers are responsible for framing the curriculum for their schools and guiding its development. They are also responsible for the management of their schools. One local authority spokesman regretted that some of them gave precedence to their managerial over their academic leadership functions.

We saw for ourselves that at least in some schools there is a trend away from the autocratic control of the headteacher to collegial decision-making and management. Two factors are facilitating this trend. First, the very shift to comprehensive schools, which often entailed the amalgamation of two or more existing schools, caused many headteachers to perceive that a large school offering a broad curriculum could not be effectively managed by one man or woman alone. Secondly, a structure of promoted posts, now installed in every school, readily permits a participatory system of management.

That structure also permits the adoption of a whole-school policy on curriculum and assessment as recommended by the Dunning Report. In several of the schools that we visited various approaches to that end were being tried and tested. A common approach is to enunciate the aims of the school and the general principles underlying the teaching provision. One obstacle, to which we have referred more than once, is the attachment of many teachers to subject teaching and familiar teaching methods. Staff cooperation cannot be achieved overnight but must be introduced slowly so as to lessen the risk of confrontation. Most headteachers realise this. A few, however, try to force the pace of change and run up against a wall of resistance.

In OECD countries quite contrasting views of the role of headteachers are to be found, from one that endorses the notion of the all powerful headteacher to one that insists on a collegial mode of control. Scotland is apparently moving towards the pyramidal structure that seems to function so effectively. However, autocratic headteachers, who do not incarnate the spirit of the Munn and Dunning reforms, apparently remain. A school would be very unfortunate, indeed, if it should fall under the domination of a young headteacher of autocratic persuasion. On the one hand, it is good to appoint the young and enterprising to the highest posts. On the other hand, it is surely necessary to use some system of checks and balances to ensure that they are not in a position to abuse their powers for twenty five years or more.

Our impression is that there is scope for still more planned staff development within the schools and more effective communications both through the hierarchy of responsible posts and across subject barriers. This presupposes that all the staff should feel involved in the formulation of school objectives and seeing to it that they are implemented.

RELATIONS WITH PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY

Arguably, the Scottish education system is self-contained. At the school level, we were frequently told that the presence of parents was not encouraged. An exception to this situation may be found in the few areas where the community school concept has been taken up, though several teachers in so-called community schools told us that close relations with parents and the community were more apparent than real. A proposal is apparently under consideration to appraise the community school experience which, we believe, should be pursued.

The 1981 Education (Scotland) Act strengthened the right of parents to choose to which school, within a given zone, to send their children but, in fact, most children go to the school nearest their home. Parents can send their children to any school within an authority free of charge. Only if they send their children to a school under the jurisdiction of another authority do they have to pay fees. Normally, children living more than three miles from their school are entitled to free transport.

Despite the existence of statutory schools councils and various forms of parent-teacher associations, parents in general appear to show little interest in being represented in the governance and management of schools and there are few signs of the parental power movement that has emerged in several other OECD countries in recent times. Several of the educators with experience of other countries whom we met commented that links between the schools and parents were less close than elsewhere, especially in the case of parents whose children were experiencing the greatest difficulties at school. There are no school governors, headteachers answering directly to their local authorities. There is no tradition of external local influence over the curriculum, whether by parents or others, and virtually all the funding comes from public taxation. It should still be stressed, however, that there appears to be no sense of alienation between schools and their communities. On the contrary, schools are strongly felt to belong to their communities, even if on their own terms, and the great majority of parents is satisfied with the education provided for their children. That, indeed, may well be the explanation: parents are concerned about their own children's progress through the system but not about the larger functioning of the system as a whole. Some schools clearly do not welcome parental involvement in school life in general but all do make positive efforts to bring parents into the schools, for example, towards the end of the second year when future options have to be determined and to respond to their wishes and those of their children. The 1981 Act also requires education authorities and schools to provide a range of information to parents. We were impressed by the informative content and lively tone of two of the school handbooks given to us.

THE QUALITY OF SCHOOLING AND MONITORING OF THE SYSTEM

In Scotland, both public opinion and politicians are expressing rising expectations of education. Regardless of controversies over school structures and differentiation according to academic abilities, the Scottish authorities share the contemporary desire of many countries to improve the very quality of education for all young people. They are aware that schools produce widely different outcomes and are seeking to know why. One answer, it is believed, is to establish quality norms and to make maximum use of all available resources. Other desiderata include the improvement of school management procedures, about which a report is in preparation, better staff structures, involvement of staff in whole school policies, a large increase in in-service training, effective curriculum development, and a permanent system of school assessment. These are all essential requirements but the key question is how to ensure that they are satisfied.

It is obviously important to know whether the comprehensive school is fulfilling the purposes for which it was established. Above all, has it brought about greater equality of opportunity within the schools and in the transition from the schools to subsequent careers. Scotland appears to be unusually well placed to monitor nation-wide educational progress. We have already referred to the role of the inspectorate. We have not referred, however, to the research studies carried out in the universities (notably by the Centre for Educational Sociology at the University of Edinburgh) and elsewhere. Plentiful, validated evidence exists on student attitudes and on correlations between achievement and socio-economic background. The challenge appears to be how to integrate all the available and potential instruments into an integrated monitoring system.

KEY REPORTS PUBLISHED BY THE SCOTTISH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

1. The Structure of the Curriculum in the Third and Fourth Years of the Scottish Secondary School (1977).

2. Assessment for All. Report of the Committee to Review Assessment in the Third and Fourth Years of Secondary Education in Scotland (1977).

3. Truancy and Indiscipline in Schools in Scotland: The Pack Report (1977).

4. The Munn and Dunning Reports: Framework for Decision (1982).

5. The Structure of the Curriculum in the Third and Fourth Years of the Scottish Secondary School (1977).

   Learning and Teaching in Scottish Secondary Schools: the Contribution of Educational Technology (1982).

6. Curriculum and Assessment in the Third and Fourth Years of Secondary Education in Scotland: a Feasibility Study (1979).

   Guidance in Scottish Secondary Schools (1976).

7. 16-18s in Scotland: an Action Plan (1983).

8. Teaching and Learning in the Senior Stages of the Secondary School (1983).

   Primary Education in the Eighties: a COPE Position Paper (1983).

V

THE UNITED STATES: MARYLAND AND MINNESOTA

by

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INTRODUCTION: ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

Although the focus of this Report is on the middle years of schooling in just two State systems, those of Maryland and Minnesota, we consider education against the wider national and international background by addressing such broad issues as: the achievements and future of the comprehensive school; public concern over the quality of education; the effectiveness of school systems and established processes of teaching and learning in achieving the quality that is increasingly demanded; the appraisals now being made of adolescent schooling in the light of dramatic changes in international trade, youth employment patterns and technological innovations.

It is clear that, in contemporary America, appraisals of and policy initiatives in secondary education as a whole are coming to affect schooling at the lower secondary level. A powerful downwards thrust into the schools of notions of social utility, economic efficiency and international competitiveness encounters a long-standing professional concern for the values of childhood and a form of schooling that places the interests of pupils and their growth patterns at the very centre of pedagogy. We were impressed by the ability of many, but not all, educators to question familiar practices and by their readiness to rethink policies and try new approaches. One senior administrator in Minnesota declared: "We have tried everything; we don't regard anything as sacrosanct".

A ready indicator of this dynamism is the frequent use as reference points of the recent wave of national reports upon education. These reports are focused mainly on the high schools, but their basic themes refer also to lower secondary education, both junior high schools and middle schools. Indeed, the very strong effort Maryland has made to establish the middle school as a distinct entity with its own ethos and educational regimen raises the question as to how it is to relate to the high school that follows it.

Whether welcome or not, the national reports provide a framework for debate and public policy, even when they contain little of direct application to the types of schools (middle schools in Maryland, junior high schools in Minnesota) that we visited. It is not so much types of schools that are at issue -- and certainly not the very principle of comprehensive education which continues to preoccupy some European systems -- but the need for all schools to show a responsiveness to major national concerns. For example, the uses and diffusion of information technology and student performance in basic areas of learning feature equally in the national reports and in the conversation of teachers and administrators of schools and education offices visited.

Even though our inquiry is addressed to two of the 50 State systems, the concerns that surfaced are doubtless similar in other parts of the United States. For educational policy-makers, system parameters and issues were salient; the management of the resource base on a tight budget; student enrolment trends and their implications for buildings and personnel; the recruitment of teachers and personnel policies; monitoring major changes in the structure and organisation of schooling; standards of performance in the context of critical climates of public and professional opinion. It is refreshing to find, in all of this necessary preoccupation with system management, frequent references to the educational needs of the clients: the students themselves, the parents and the community. Wider social, economic, political and cultural needs provide relevant contexts for meeting student needs but for the State and local systems, they cannot be substituted for them or even superimposed on them. This, at least, is how the educators administering the system and teaching the students like to see things.

One question, therefore, that we ourselves keep to the fore in our report is the extent to which students in the school itself are treated as the central concern of the educational enterprise. We have taken particular note of the evidence, at the school level, of awareness and appreciation of student characteristics, sensitivity towards problems of defining their needs and appreciation of the distinctive problems or trends in the stage of transition from childhood to full adolescence and young adulthood.

Maryland and Minnesota are, according to several criteria, well-resourced and high-performing education systems. The historical pattern of settlement and the demography and culture of the former which dates from almost the earliest period of English settlement of the East Coast is very different from that of the latter resulting from Nordic and Germanic waves of cross-Continent migration dating largely from the C 18 and C 19. Yet, in each State, there are major urban-industrial centres, with rural hinterlands and a diversity of populations within the jurisdictional borders. The pull of the East Coast megalopolitan corridor, including the national capital, obviously affects Maryland in employment, mobility, communications and so forth. By contrast, in Minnesota there is a much more definite sense of a self-contained and independent region whose commercial north-south linkages have traditionally been river-based, by-passing that magnetic East Coast corridor. If historical development of economic activity, cultural norms, demography, traditions, myths and self-perceptions give an ambience to schooling through the values of teachers and nuances of interpersonal relationships, these are much less evident to the visitor than several factors which link the two States firmly together.

In both States, senior personnel in administrative offices and schools are alert to the nationwide climate of opinion which is expressed in and reinforced by such widely discussed national reports (1) as those of the National Commission on Excellence in Education (A Nation at Risk) and the Education Commission of the States Task Force on Education for Economic Growth (Action for Excellence). Moreover, many of them were more directly sympathetic with those national studies which seemed to have as their focal concern not the crisis of economic competitiveness, but the experience of students and teachers in schools (notably John Goodlad's A Place Called School, the Carnegie Foundation's High School and the National Association of Secondary School Principals' and the National Association of Independent School's A Study of High Schools). The educators share, as one would expect, a common professional understanding, interests and language that, on the one hand, helps to define a professional community and, on the other, marks some important differences between them and the wider array of interest groups involved in the public critique of schooling.

A second theme linking these two States and, on the evidence we have, the large majority of State and local school districts in the United States, is the belief that widespread change is in the air and an evident commitment to overall reform. This has many manifestations: reviews and critiques of policies and programmes; a critical stance towards the structures and organisations of schooling including a readiness to experiment and innovate and to appraise the results vigorously and with professional rigour; a quest for funds, from wherever they may be available in the community, for further development work, for example, of school curricula and professional training programmes. It would be wrong to attribute this commitment to reform and renewal to the impact of the national reports. Rather, it is an amalgam of many forces, some of very long-standing in the education profession itself, some local and some political. A consequence of this energetic and not always harmonized quest for new departures is the emergence of a host of issues, problems, paradoxes and contradictions.

Deeply embedded interests and a lack of means for achieving consensus explain several unresolved tensions. Thus, pre-vocational job skills training of a structured and even mechanistic kind competes with the general or liberal education that for well over a century has been widely regarded as the staple of adolescent education. There is another tension between highly-structured, not to say quite rigid, formulations of the contents, methods and materials required in studying well-defined school subjects, and the contemporary manifestation of the progressive tradition of organising learning tasks around the emerging interests of students and relating the processes of learning to what is known of their capabilities and distinctive styles of response. Yet another tension is caused by the contradiction between tightly-defined managerial models of school leadership, some with authoritarian overtones, and the challenge to traditional authority, whether person-to-person or the subject-matter expertise of academic specialists, implicit in the new information technologies and their wider ramifications in the knowledge-based society. These, and other, tensions are common to education and the wider society in both State systems and, we would surmise, they are to be found throughout the United States.

The unprecedented volume of national education reports, already mentioned, requires some further elucidation if we are to understand the trend of events in the education of the younger adolescent, and the plans and policies now under review and reconstruction as educators become more closely engaged with events in the wider environment. This elucidation is all the more necessary since the picture painted of schooling in many of the more critical reports is different in many respects from what we observed. Although several of them speak directly to such problems as teacher preparation and in-service education, curriculum planning, design and development, and the relationships of the school to the community, there is more to be gained from considering the inferences to be drawn for early adolescent education from their basis theses than from a recapitulation of specific proposals. This is because educators and informed members of the public are responding not so much to the details or even the specific analyses of the overall stance of the reports, but to the general critique and the global strategies they are advancing. With this in mind, it is not difficult to see why such relatively straightforward and outspoken critiques as A Nation at Risk appear to be far more influential in practice than the much more considered and professionally sophisticated A Place Called School. Whereas the former offers a clarion call to action, incorporating, we were often told, a large amount of misinformation about school practice and distortions of evidence on performance, the latter sensitively documents a large amount of "good practice". We were struck more by the manner in which this wave of reports was talked about, and the way the more forthright proposals were being acted upon through system-wide interventionist programmes, than by a school-based or school-focused network approach whereby, at the ground level, teachers in schools were being encouraged to develop their own ideas and share and exchange their experiences in local professional networks. It is no more than an impression, but it seemed to us that some of the more prominent of these national level criticisms of the performance of schools were less likely to elicit self-appraisal and professional development at the school level than to further a general sense of unease and encourage an explicit move towards social and economic utilitarianism and of managerial styles of leadership in reshaping educational policies and school practice.

The main theses of the reports are:

-- School functions -- explicit social, economic and pre-defined cultural goals and roles must find a place alongside personal development and traditional academic values;

-- Curriculum inadequacies are pinpointed and alternatives proposed (generally a pre-defined subject-based core curriculum is proposed for all students, with variation of pace and content but not of basic areas of knowledge, skills and values);

-- The concepts of excellence and quality, including outcomes measures to ensure that they are being pursued and attained, are dominant; (the 1960s and 70s concerns of inequalities, inequities, minority rights and highly variable learnings are commonly played down);

-- Attention is given to the educational roles of decision-taking, management and leadership, with emphasis on leaders including school-level managers (principals and deputies, usually) and their responsibility for initiating, managing and monitoring change;

-- Resources are acknowledged as a problem and there is a plea for more, but on strict accountability terms;

-- The quality of *teaching*, the selection, education, initial and in-service training of teachers are seen as a *sine qua non* of educational improvement;

-- The *administrative* functions, at state, district and national levels are highlighted, and the reform of administration is seen as part and parcel of school improvement;

-- The *dilemmas* of education for *all* youth in what is often an educationally indifferent environment are identified or emerge sometimes unnoticed;

-- A central preoccupation is the need for American schools to raise by significant amounts the *standards* of student performance, especially in the so-called basic skills.

For our purposes certain issues or themes stand out from the reports. They are mainly *policy* matters, including:

-- Concern for the *quality of student performance*, and the difficulty even of ascertaining, let alone raising it;

-- Preoccupation with *school-work transition* and the effect that perceived youth labour market needs have on the curriculum of the younger adolescent;

-- *Core curriculum* including the question of what it should comprise -- and by whom and how it ought to be defined -- and a general orientation towards (i) cognitive learning and (ii) skills training through applications;

-- *Problems of implementation* via the combined efforts of educators, parents, citizens -- and students;

-- Issues for *educational research and development* and the implications for policy, including school structures, programmes and goals.

We accept that the reports are highly significant as evidence of genuine concern and as a source of strategic thinking. We have drawn attention to them because both within the United States and outside they are widely cited as evidence of serious shortcomings in educational practice. However, whilst we acknowledge their importance as data sources, in helping to focus attention, nationally, on educational reform -- mainly in the high schools and in teacher education -- as a high priority, setting the scene for debate, and their impact on the thought and practice of many educators, their significance for the processes of school and local level change seem, from our observations, to have been exaggerated. Much of what they propose is based on what many school systems and schools are already doing. Moreover, it is not the reports themselves that will directly inform action in the schools, but the active engagement by teachers, parents, administrators, community members and students, in the review and reconstruction of schooling at the local or school level. One critic recently underlined a practical problem which, arising from the sheer volume and diversity of the reports, faces educators:

> The contemporary scene is marked by waves of conflicting and

> contradictory criticism and reinvented demands for reform...Unless the profession sorts out the contradictory demands and prescriptions for reform, the schools will continue to be buffeted by conflicting demands and will ride whatever socio-political tide is dominant (2).

What is disturbing here is the implication of cynicism in schools faced with impossible demands. More often, we experienced this less than _either_ the belief that the problems were well in hand, _or_, sometimes, a sense of unease and bewilderment in relation to proposals for radical change. As one of our interlocutors said, we know how to do what we are doing; it's not a complete success but, on the whole it works. It's not clear how (or why) we should embark on a drastically new and different course and we're not convinced that most of the Report writers really know and understand the realities of school life.

To the outsider, the education scene at first sight seems to be hyperactive. On closer inspection, the picture changes somewhat; there is far more _evidence of continuity_, of the steady evolution, development and application of State and district strategies and programmes, and of fields of action where concerns are more local than national and solutions to problems reflect State-wide determinations, not the clarion calls from the national platforms. Specifically in relation to the question which in large parts of Western Europe is still a source of deep contention, the common comprehensive school is generally accepted as a suitable form of organisation for whatever kinds of reform in curriculum, pedagogy, administration and funding may be needed.

A CONTEXT FOR CHANGE

The history of the common school in America takes us back to its origins in the 17th Century in New England and reminds us of the religio-political basis; to the Revolutionary Period plans and programmes of civic education for a new republic, the 19th century immigration waves and the perceived need to build a common culture from disparate elements, the impact in the late 19th century of Continental (especially German) pedagogy which inspired new ideals and practices brought to maturity in John Dewey's _The Child and the Curriculum_ and, later, _Democracy and Education_, and the emergence of mass secondary education whose problems were addressed in the late 19th or early 20th century committees (3).

In the 1930s, and again in the 1950s, there were strenuous efforts to come to terms with _the demands of universal education at the secondary level_: curricular and organisational patterns were devised for _all_ youth (life-adjustment education). More recently, the first great international challenge came in the mid-to-late fifties, with Sputnik and the fear of loss of technological ascendancy and political hegemony. Since then, reform measures have abounded. They include the Elementary and Secondary Education Acts, the curriculum development movement originating in mathematics and science projects in the 1950s, the rapid growth of educational R&D, integration and its upheavals and the determined efforts in the 1960s to achieve a measure of fairness in access to schooling and participation in its benefits -- regardless of ethnicity, social class, geographical location or other factors that have worked to the detriment of the common school ideal.

We need to focus on the forces working on, as much as within, the common school, the issues it is identifying or failing to notice, its responses and possible futures. It is one of the defining characteristics or features of the national culture and genuinely a key social institution. Its deficiencies are regarded as those of the society itself. Of particular concern, therefore, is society's expectations of what it knows to be its own schools and its readiness to stimulate, encourage, support and, if necessary, direct them accordingly. This helps to explain the "culture of concern" which now, as in the past, surrounds the debate on the school in society.

It is not necessary, in affirming a widespread and long-standing American confidence in the common, publicly-provided and publicly-controlled school, to invoke a quasi-mystical ideal or to conjure up a universal, if tacit, conviction that the "school of democracy" is a people's school in which all share and participate on a footing of equality, not only of access but also of opportunity within and, more recently, of outcomes or rewards. Such ideals and convictions, although they have formed part of the folklore of schooling in the United States, have been shattered by research dating back at least to G. S. Counts' exposé of the social composition of school boards and, even earlier, to the assaults of the "muck rakers" on the shibboleths of late 19th century democracy in the era of the robber barons (4). There is, nevertheless, a backcloth of beliefs, values, ideals, images and aspirations which cannot be ignored if we are to understand the peculiar passion and determination which mark the current debates over the performance of the public school and the resolution with which, yet again, reform measures are being pursued by those holding public office. These background considerations must be given weight alongside such immediate issues as fiscal accountability, law, order and juvenile delinquency, absenteeism and low test scores. The people's school is under challenge -- not to justify itself so much as to show a willingness and ability to respond to social and cultural change. Several factors recurred in discussions; two examples will suffice.

First, how can the school meet challenges to social order and authority, positively cultivate the rule of law and contend with delinquency, violence and crime? American democratic values and her economic hegemony are under international challenge. The work ethic in practice, work performance (skills) and American "know how" are likewise under international challenge. Inter-personal relations, family life, the role of the church, and the mores of middle America have undergone immense if not always acknowledged change. Uncertainty over the role of school in relation to all of this is one of the keynotes in the present debate. "Let us take a firm, directive approach with a prescriptive curriculum, strong but fair discipline and well-judged demands for continuous hard work" is a common response, whether through broad guidelines issued by States or through the expressed philosophy of numerous school principals and local administrators.

Secondly, the age profile of the population poses problems for schools dependent on local taxes; for example, in Minneapolis, only 17 per cent of households have school-age children. Public perceptions of the place of the school for children in an ageing society and of tax support of schooling are disturbing to educators who must command local, district and State support:

- -- A sagging birthrate means falling enrolments with political battles over school amalgamations and closures;
- -- In ethnic terms, there are major changes in the pattern of minorities (taking the country as a whole, there is a substantial increase in Hispanic, Chicano, Asian peoples; hence the place of Blacks in the ethnic minority mix is changing. To illustrate: by the end of this century, California will be, on present trends, the first "minority is majority" State due mainly to Hispanic and Asian population increases.);
- -- Population mobility -- now, more than ever, the United States is a country on the move. The educational implications are not obvious, but are seen by many as underlining the need for a core curriculum and tighter State control on local practice;
- -- City-country distributions -- moves from inner city and urban areas to surburban rings and from rural to urban or suburban "rings" continue, creating major problems, as for example for the resourcing of urban or "inner ring" schools in Baltimore;
- -- An ageing (stable or static) teaching population poses problems in an educational environment where the emphasis has moved towards restructuring, re-organisation and a new dynamic for change.

It is not suggested that the changes in the communities the schools serve are uniform, or even that there is, locally, a high level of awareness of what they might mean for the organisation and practice of schooling. What is striking and encouraging is the readiness of administrators and other educational leaders to acknowledge that the policies for, and practice of, schooling must be related systematically to social change so that the issues arising may be identified and addressed. This was evident alike at local and State levels, with a noticeable development in State level planning responses.

What is everywhere widely acknowledged and debated is the state of the economy. The tax burden for education has moved towards State and districts as the Federal Government pulls out of many special programmes, marginal, in financial terms, but crucial for purposes of changes in direction, new policies and programmes and educational research and development. Compounding this problem is the reduced capacity of tax sources to pay during periods of recession. In a time of high youth unemployment and record welfare benefit payments, education competes for the tax dollar with other social sectors. Hence the significance of age profiles, which vary from district to district within a State. Related to this is the high cost of the often well-resourced schools, including the extended social role of the school: special programmes which are needed, and are in place, for minorities; health care; maternity advice and other costly innovations. The need is apparent; the ability to continue to pay to meet it is questioned. The unevenness of the resource base in a localised education system where wealth and poverty exist side by side is no new phenomenon but is disquieting on educational, social and ethical grounds. Not surprisingly, "logistics", a combination of economic and political considerations, was frequently presented as the explanation for educational policy decisions.

In external relations, we were conscious of an overriding preoccupation with America's capacity to compete internationally in the increasingly cut-throat economic environment, and hence with her long-run ability both to produce competitive manpower and to pay her way. There can be no doubt that the national reports and the media have fuelled this concern and that schools are perceived as a crucial element in meeting this challenge, with little open acknowledgement by the critics of the complex nature of decision-making in education, including the long lead-time required for changes to take effect in the capabilities and skills of the working population.

The schools, and especially middle or junior high schooling beginning at age 11 or 12, are thus pushed towards a role which many are not, at present, well equipped to meet, taking into account their curricula, teaching methods, materials and equipment and the expertise and attitudes of teachers. Just how demanding this role is may be indicated by setting it against the drive towards a high-technology, knowledge-based society, which we were frequently invited to examine. Our concern is with how far and in what ways these social and technological forces might impinge upon, or are expected to affect, the education of the younger adolescent. Difficult as it may be to conceive of direct linkage, for example in curriculum changes, there can be no doubt that there are crucial relationships to investigate. Thus, schools are already seen as targets for large-scale commercial production of software, as well as hardware; the technologies of design, production and dissemination are permeating educational analysis in a way they have not done since the relatively ineffectual programmed-learning movement died down in the early 1970s; the scenarios of upper secondary and higher education, young adulthood and "future life" that are now being drawn provide a fresh challenge to the child- or learner-centred models of curriculum and pedagogy which have been imported into the junior high or middle schools from elementary education.

The developments mentioned in the preceding paragraph are only the tip of an iceberg. We are witnessing, according to some analysts, the rapid emergence of what promises to be a new socio-economic order. With the benefit of substantial incentives from Federal and State governments and heavy investment from the private sector, a new high-technology industrial base is being laid down. Large-scale, sophisticated research and development projects and units, supported by this mix of public and private sector finance, will pioneer new multi-disciplinary technologies involving bio-technology, artificial intelligence systems, new generations of computers and associated information networks, space research and so forth. These will feed new industries and transform or eliminate the operations of older industries. One of the keys to these transformations is a concept of knowledge as a structure of information which can be, according to plan, generated, stored, retrieved, analysed and linked through large-scale, international networks based on centres and personnel possessing similar characteristics and interests regardless of their geo-political location. Knowledge, thus conceived, organised and orchestrated, itself becomes a powerful generator of economic activity and those who have control of it, in the manner indicated, will assert their supremacy, not least in international economic competition. This scenario requires actors of a different kind from what educational institutions now commonly produce. A new, information-sensitive, machine-friendly and technically competent generation is required. To hasten this process, computers, word processors, interactive video and other, related, forms of hardware will pour into the schools with heavy commercial backing. Written texts will be supplemented and by degrees displaced by video displays and within-school, machine-made materials; school organisation, including the overall shape and content of the curriculum and pedagogical practice, will come to resemble or be analogous to the knowledge organisation systems alluded to above. The early 20th century industrial revolution symbolised by the people-manned Ford assembly line, production of standardized physical objects and a hierarchical pattern of social relations will give way to robotic production and the concentration of human resources on system design, maintenance at key points and high grade consumption in which the use of leisure will feature strongly.

The United States is but one of several advanced industrial countries where rapid growth of knowledge-based industry is treated as feasible. Yet it is exaggerated, since it omits a huge volume of small-scale, self-initiated, small-group and, in systems terms, disorganised economic, industrial and socio-cultural activity and is presented by education administrators, and not only by futurologists, as part of their policy planning apparatus. These same administrators and policy analysts identify Japan as the most crucial economic competitor in Asia, with the Federal Republic of Germany as a second line of challenge in Western Europe. In the ideological sphere, on the other hand, they are seen to share with the United States common ground in competition with the Soviet Union and associated countries.

Asymmetry in economic competition and ideological collaboration presents problems for schools, even if they are scarcely recognised. In its intellectual, technical and broadly cognitive aspects, schooling prepares, or is enjoined to prepare, young Americans to meet challenges in the international systems from equally determined countries. In its affective, attitudinal, normative or value dimensions, however, schooling has a different and perhaps contradictory function to perform, in establishing affinities with countries seen as economic competitors, in common cause against a perceived ideological threat. Fear of communism competes with fear of other capitalist states. School practice and local policy, however, have other preoccupations, including the persistence of curriculum and pedagogy with roots deep in pre-industrial history and the demands of everyday personal and family life, recreation, work and community participation in local communities.

It should not be surprising, therefore, that schooling is characterised by acute tensions, which are indeed exacerbated by a widespread expectation that the schools will improve their productivity to meet whatever challenges are high on the agenda and in ways that lend themselves to the measurement and comparison of performance, both of students and their teachers. Hence, education is a highly visible and competitive activity; in return for resources, schools must account for themselves. Hence a preoccupation with tight and tough management and outcome measures, as strongly evident among individual school principals as among State officials and politicians. "Education", as Commissioner Randall of Minnesota said, "is on the front burner again, after years of quiescence". Education is also, as Assistant Superintendent Deasy of Maryland remarked, a balancing act, both within the schools and between school interests and those of the wider society. Public pressure on the schools is no new phenomenon in the United States and may be no greater now than in the 1950s when comparisons were drawn, to the detriment of American secondary education, with Soviet schools.

Nor is the international comparative use and misuse of pupil data new. In this instance, the interpretations placed on the International Studies of

Educational Achievement have fuelled old flames: the premises may be false and the data unsatisfactory, but the conclusion is perversely popular: in the basic skills subjects, including mathematics and science, American students do worse (5). That seems to be the message influential members of the public, the media and many leading educational figures almost want to hear. For reasons already stated, schooling in such a context of comparison and expectation is subjected to pressures and strains that are scarcely manageable. We noted the permanent, unduly high demand laid by society on its schools, setting against it the chronic underfunding which is most conspicuous in teachers' salaries and the inequalities of school districts resulting from the principle of local control in a highly diverse and economically unequal albeit rich society.

Set against this pattern of competition and expectation is an important element in the political, legal and administrative spheres. This comprises mandated programmes and ever-tightening control and direction of local policy and practice: mandatory desegregation; mainstreaming of special education students; magnet (special provision) programmes for gifted children or those with special interests; state-wide or district-wide testing. Equally visible in Maryland and Minnesota, such programmes are symptomatic of trends towards a national approach even where means of delivery remain in local hands. There is thus, to a degree not found in any other OECD country, a social-cultural determination that, where problems are agreed on, needs identified or the courts intervene, a swiftly executed and usually system-wide response transcending local boundaries and interests is required. Administrators, including school principals, must act through comprehensive prescribed programmes, notwithstanding the frequent insistence that the district is the ultimate arbiter.

STRATEGIC FACTORS IN CHANGE AND ORGANISATION OF SCHOOL SYSTEMS

Educators at all levels in both States visited are highly conscious of what is expected of them. They display sensitivity to public criticism of schooling, adaptability and flexibility in policy planning and management, readiness to mobilise resources in pursuit of agreed goals and objectives and a willingness to debate educational problems in a broadly-defined future context as well as in ways that relate directly to immediate local issues. This ability to move swiftly across a diverse range of levels of analysis and action is highly functional in the complex and changing environment of contemporary American economics, politics and social affairs. There appear to be plenty of administrators, within the schools, as well as at district and State levels, who have these interests or capabilities. What has to be explained, therefore, is the mixture of rigidity of organisational structure and pedagogy frequently observed and the persistence in educational practice of many long-standing problems which constitute a definite barrier to the achievement of the goals of strategic planning. One answer given to us is that the broad political context within which education operates constantly demands that interests be balanced so that compromise in practice follows clarity and conviction at the policy level. It is not challenging the force of this claim to suggest that perhaps the socio-cultural and economic analyses, and the management and policy skills-training processes, are themselves less than comprehensive. Leadership training may be missing out on some of the crucial factors in the situation, such as people's interests as distinct from "political interests", people's everyday life-style, and, as distinct from pressure group representations, the contrast between the rhetoric surrounding the technological peaks of modern society and people's lived experience of the much larger areas of foothills and flatlands.

The education system appears to be dynamic, energetic and problem-oriented in so far as critical analysis and policy review and planning are concerned. There is an overall preference for designing policies and programmes conceived as strategies for intervention and improvement: schooling is itself constantly cast in strategic terms as a key factor in social-economic policy. As ever, the public school is instrumentally invested with the responsibility -- and the power -- to affect rapid, large-scale social development and handle social problems. If this is, as many critics allege, a myth, it is one of the most enduring ones of American education. State-wide adoption of testing, for example in the seventh and eighth grades of Maryland's schools, illustrates the point: the tests under the banner "Project Basic" and by State legislature requirement, are criterion-referenced and aimed at raising, not merely measuring, competence. As one senior administrator noted, there is "a considerable degree of ferment in schools provoked by and circling around these testing programmes". We return to that point later; for the moment, it can be noted that adequate test performance is legislatively required as a condition for the award of the school diploma. The role of the officials is to devise a State-wide strategy to bring about the desired changes. Similarly, in Maryland, there are State-wide strategies in support of a common core curriculum including the setting of behavioural and value objectives where emphasis is given to common values and traditions. Schools and teachers, in this context, are seen as being in need of revitalisation and support to effect these changes.

The favoured strategic style in educational policy is managerial/rational. This style implies the setting of goals and the allocating of priorities; targeted resources; specified outcomes; performance measures; procedures for monitoring, evaluation and review. The style is well-illustrated in a Minnesota policy document: "The Minnesota Department of Education... assumes the following roles and responsibilities:

1. Proposing, modifying and initiating educational policies;

2. Developing, implementing and monitoring programmes and services required in rule and statute;

3. Assisting local districts in assessing educational needs in planning programmes and services, and in evaluating the effectiveness of programmes;

4. Improving the management of educational programmes and services at the State, regional and local levels;

5. Improving the effectiveness and efficiency of information exchange" (6).

This approach is dominated by concepts of improvement and therefore by specifiable and specified criteria of improvement, as well as by enduring optimism about results. Plans are prepared in the language of what will be achieved (7). The style also betrays a certain impatience, in the sense that once "the situation" has been analysed and interpreted, programmes are installed rapidly in the expectation that development will take place "on site". An instance of this is the commitment to performance testing even though, for low achievers and cultural minorities, the results are predictably discouraging. By specifying achievable outcomes in what are frequently five-year forward projections, the planners adapt a future orientation; past experience is not reflected upon or put to use in any obvious way; on the positive side, there is a readiness to "keep trying" since the solution must lie "out there". Finally, we noted a strong nationalistic, even inward looking, stance. Relatively little is known about international experience and much that is known, or believed, is used for dubious comparisons of performance measures. This reflects the strong tradition of local control: each unit works hard to achieve relative as well as absolute advantage, although of course the State, as distinct from the district, necessarily has something of a national purview.

We are aware of a considerable body of reflective and critical writing by American educators and social scientists who have challenged the technocratic, managerial and efficiency-dominated movements they observe in their own midst. Several of the senior administrators we met questioned the approach, too.

How far, it is being asked, is the quality of schooling in the middle years actually addressed in their strategies? Is it being improved? What is the evidence? What do increases in test score levels tell us? Are the talents and energies of teachers being fully drawn upon? Are the strategies for change student-focused or are they deployed because of a faith in their ultimate efficacy, built up from experience in the rather different fields of business and industry? These questions are being asked, about the ends as well as the means, and they deserve further attention.

THE STUDENT IN THE SCHOOL

Thus far, our discussion has been directed at some of the broader trends and issues which provide a context for considering the educational policies and programmes designed specifically for students in the middle years of schooling. It is time to focus on the students and the manner in which they are being educated.

We encountered two contrasting images of the younger adolescent student. The one, which is quite conspicuous in Maryland, is identified by the use of the term "transescence" and sees the period of adolescence as worthy of consideration in its own right, providing a rationale for a distinct organisational pattern, namely, middle schools. Although recognised as a period of transition, adolescence is not subordinated to adult life or to the values and way of life of society beyond the schools. "The goal of the middle school", as a Howard County handbook has it, "is to provide for the academic, personal, social and cultural growth of transescents" (8). According to this approach, a socio-psychological analysis of "transescence" is necessary as a foundation for school policy and practice. In such analyses, attention is frequently drawn to the characteristics, needs and problems of the young adolescent in contemporary society:

-- The onset of puberty and its personally unsettling effects ("turbulent adolescence") (9);

-- Individual variability in student personality and the need to provide for it ("students are people");

-- The unsuitability for the middle school programme of such popular features of high school as interscholastic athletics (competitive), proms, formal dances and single purpose socials (pairing);

-- Working parents, single parents and the solitude and loneliness of suburban youth (hence "the shopping mall, our de facto community centre for the youth of America") (10).

The contrasting image is that of the younger adolescent being schooled for adult life. Here, the emphasis is less on psycho-social issues than on the demands of high school and college preparation, the state of the youth labour market and the expectations society has of its schools as institutions for initiation into adult roles, especially in respect of economic productivity and citizenship. As Commissioner Ruth Randall wrote in a covering letter to her report on the need for curriculum change, "Minnesota education will be restructured to provide the highest possible productivity and performance for all learners" (11). In this approach, particular emphasis is given to the relationship of the education of the younger and older adolescent to economic factors, paying for it and seeking an economic yield, to measurable outcome performance, competitive test scores, and to a concept of excellence derived less from an analysis of the life of the younger adolescent than from criteria and standards very firmly set in adult life.

It would be a mistake to treat these contrasting views as either located uniquely in one State or another or indeed as necessarily conflicting. There is ample evidence in the practice of schooling as well as in policy documents and the views of educators that both approaches are being pursued with great vigour and determination. The practice of schooling is sufficiently variable and complex to ensure that, even within a single county, there is evidence of both of these orientations. It is reasonable to ask, however, whether the actual and potential differences between them are being addressed. Thus, in several districts in both States, highly-structured not to say rigid curricula and directive teaching are in place where great concern is expressed for the individual and group needs of quite diverse student populations. It is not clear that school programmes are in practice sufficiently comprehensive, flexible and student-centred in respect of the content and organisation of learning to meet the requirements indicated in the psycho-social analysis of transescence. This issue is compounded by the complexity of the ethnic and social-class patterns whereby, within a single school, may be found students whose families come from many different parts of the world and whose income levels range from virtual poverty to considerable wealth. Consequently, it is a question, yet to be adequately answered, as to how the distinctive cultural characteristics of young adolescents are to be identified and addressed in programmes strongly dominated by unitary models of performance, achievement and success (common objectives, similar sounding bodies of content, state-wide testing). At any rate, the strain on the pedagogical expertise and resourcefulness of the teacher is very great.

The contrasting views of transescence pose another question. In a middle school or junior high school of two or three years' duration, it is extremely difficult, but not impossible, to create an environment for learning which genuinely serves as a bridge or transition between childhood and late adolescence. Teachers and administrators alike, to say nothing of parents, are still accustomed to the categories of "elementary" age child and "secondary" age student. Teachers are trained and have been recruited, on the whole, for one or the other and tend to see their career paths that way. In Maryland, where the commitment to middle-school organisation is high, this is seen as a problem to be resolutely addressed. The middle school ethos is therefore a real issue. School life has to be so constructed and sustained that both the adult/society and the child life/individual-centred images or viewpoints are given a place. Using the argument of Maryland educators, that the concept of early adolescence as a stage of development must be analysed and understood in personal, social and cultural terms, we found ourselves searching for evidence of pedagogy responsive to the learner's unique experiences, perceptions and values. There seemed less of this than of an orientation towards the wider community and the adult world into which that development is proceeding. Of particular significance, at this stage, are the changing patterns of self-images and inter-personal relations in small, self-chosen groups, and the changes in cognitive functionings which have been addressed by learning theorists and developmental psychologists. It seems to be extremely difficult in practice to keep these considerations to the fore, as school programmes are designed, equipment and materials purchased, teachers allocated and assessment and measures of student performance introduced. Equity, mandatory programmes, and system-wide planning make their own demands. There ought not to be an inconsistency between experiential or life-experience philosophy and the demands that high-school teachers, parents and the community make on the junior high school or middle school student to prepare for high school and adult life. In practice, there frequently is and, as a result, there are unresolved tensions and contradictions both in policy and practice.

The tensions and contradictions referred to and the efforts to resolve them are naturally apparent in the way young adolescent students experience school. Inevitably, our study can give only pointers to this experience. Usually, the school day is highly structured, but there are two dominant and somewhat divergent views about how the school day is best arranged. On the one hand, an orderly regime of timetabled periods, with sharp differentiation of time slots and curriculum activities within them, an approach for which the Carnegie unit was designed and one that has commanded widespread support in the middle years as well as in senior high school, although abandoned in many Maryland middle schools. On the other hand, acknowledging a more child-centred pedagogy, attempts are made to block time, to run subjects and topics into one another and to teach through groups or teams of teachers. The first approach, which is the most common, is tidy and lends itself in practice to differentiation of subject matter, not integration, and a high degree of teacher-mediated control through pre-planned syllabuses, text materials and an instructional pedagogy. This approach is frequently associated with ability grouping and setting or banding in particular subject areas. For example, the practice in some middle schools of 5 "layers" or "sets" in reading (enrichment; developmental; corrective; remedial 2; remedial 1). Yet tracking in the form of complete separation is now uncommon. There is also a very strong move nationally towards mainstreaming, particularly with regard to students previously placed in special schools or classes for various disabilities and handicaps. There is indeed a common school, and the students experience it in very different ways, with subject-based ability grouping a favoured device. But is this really child-centred? And does a strong structure, including rigorous testing, help the schools so to organise the school day, week, semester and year that the varied individual characteristics and needs of students, as students and parents themselves identify them, will be met? Students seem to experience conflicting or ambivalent adult values over such vital topics as control and organisation of time, grouping and the structuring of school knowledge.

The conduct of students in schools provides a further example of the contrast we have drawn between schooling based on a) an assessment of individual, personal and cultural characteristics and a view of early adolescence as a period of turbulence, energy and creativity, and b) a preparation for adult roles through highly-structured learning programmes and settings. There is a common preconception of the young American student as noisy and tough, imposing upon school life the mores of youth culture including rowdyism, anti-intellectualism and a tinge of violence. Both in Maryland and Minnesota, we formed a totally different impression: schools everywhere were apparently orderly, marked by a high degree of structure and what appeared to be well-accepted social control. The enthusiasm in Maryland for competency-based minimum proficiency curricula is a clear manifestation of the tendency to define goals clearly and set individual learning requirements firmly within these decreed goals. We observed, for example, teachers writing daily and weekly instructional objectives on boards, and having "warm-up" lesson previews. Rules of conduct were clearcut in school handbooks for parents and students, known and acted upon; likewise, sanctions were very specific, and imposed; there was little or no evidence of litter or untidiness in the majority of schools visited. Students, with relatively few exceptions, appeared to be well-mannered, orderly and responsive to the adults in their midst. The precision, speed and self-imposed discipline of school busing is perhaps a symbol of this condition. In a similar vein, politeness and a comfortable acceptance of the authority of the teachers in the classroom as knowledgeable adults with defined tasks, responsibilities and institutional roles, were markedly in evidence. The student within the classroom, workshop or laboratory is the recipient, in the typical instance, of a highly didactic form of instruction usually organised and referenced by objectives and tests at the State or district, not school, level.

In the communication, recreational and social areas of the school, the student experiences relaxed, informal and much more equal relations with the teachers. Interestingly, both the adult and the young adolescent appear to be able to make these changes rapidly and unselfconsciously. The atmosphere, or feel or moral quality, of the schools as we experienced them, in two high-achieving States where very positive and dynamic educational policies are being pursued, is summed up in the expression: "orderly places of learning". Inevitably, and daily, in these schools, young adolescents will be reminded of their role as students, as learners, in a determinate relationship with adults and with one another, goal-orientated and constantly encouraged to achieve and perform. It seems to us that factors of this kind, rather that the commonly drawn contrast between "inner city", "suburban" and "rural" student, populations and cultures, will prove to be the important ones in assessing conditions of educational success and failure.

In Maryland, where middle schools are differentiated as a distinct type, there is a strong belief in the value of this pattern of organisation and commitment to its success. Curriculum, pedagogy and teacher roles there are consistently related to this organisational form. In Minnesota, the junior high school is far less clearly differentiated from the high school but not the elementary school. Nevertheless, a number of features in the school environments are common to both systems. In general, schools are comfortable places with plenty of amenities: well designed and constructed, spacious; in good decorative order and carefully maintained and cared for; well equipped, and staffed with an impressive array of general and specialist personnel. We were met with criticism from school personnel about difficulties in getting adequate resources yet, by comparison with school systems in many OECD countries, the physical plant, materials, equipment and overall resource provision are very substantial indeed. On the face of it, these schools are places where learning opportunities abound: widespread provision of specialist laboratories for science; workshops; typing and word-processing centres; art and craft rooms; home economics centres; libraries and media centres; physical education facilities both indoor and outdoor; a wide and varied array of teaching and study areas; space and equipment for different outdoor activities; in general, the varied use of these spaces and resources for the purposes for which they have been designed and intended.

There is, in these schools, a strong sense of well-planned structure and organisation with evidence of strong and personal leadership from those in positions of responsibility and authority. But we are not convinced that this leadership is sufficiently inventive in relation to how the school is organised pedagogically. Reference has been made already to the school day which seems to consist largely of a timetabled regularity of discrete learning episodes. With or without bells, students move from one separate, sharply-defined activity to another. Yet the literature, including official material or state documents consistently argues for more subject-matter integration, greater emphasis on the students' timescales and less physical moving around the school. Maryland schools, in some instances, have blocked timetables, extended whole-class teaching and flexible use of open space. There is, nevertheless, a definite sense of highly-controlled regularity of function. The day starts and finishes early, the school functions like clockwork, it seems, and busing, for reasons of distance and integration, is obviously a factor. The school day and year are relatively short, in terms of international comparisons and learning packages are slotted into well-defined time modules. Specifically on the issue of "time on task", it must be remembered that there are relatively few public holidays and a semester rather than a three-term system. There is also the intensity of the daily work schedule, and the shortness of breaks during the American school day. In summary, the school environments are notable for the strong structure and positive order; they embody and reflect organised learning programmes; the tasks of learning are defined, articulated and presented in a well-regulated way and are "visible" in the running of the schools; efficiency is a keynote throughout. We acknowledge the advantages of all this, yet packaged learning, routine teaching, over-testing and formalistic discipline are far more widespread than the policy-makers would like. It needs to be asked whether this is not a consequence of an over-commitment to prevailing norms of managerialism, efficiency and social utility at the expense of the more thoughtful and broadly-based "middle school approach" which the literature, including school brochures, leads one to expect (12).

Certain ritualistic and symbolic features of schooling help to define a very definite and clear school identity or culture, which students, teachers, parents and even the community at large are expected or assumed to manifest. Examples include notices in foyers, newsheets, the public address system and brochures, praising performance and elevating success, and the singling out of students for attention and praise as members of this school.

All of this serves to build up and reinforce school identity, common institutional membership, shared experience, and the authority of the institution over its members. As against this, in Maryland especially, there is an avoidance of the competitive, interscholastic activities. The school is seen not as a base for competitive, older-age activities but as a largely self-contained, "warm", supportive environment. This contrasts oddly with the hierarchical managerial style and the highly-competitive approach to assessing and grading school work. The students themselves have their own strong subcultures which are to some extent ethnically divided, not so much within classrooms, although there are visible seating patterns, as in out-of-class configurations. Students are in a minor way brought into school decision-making, more on the social than on the academic side, for example the prom and fund-raising, and in formal systems of representation. In this respect, the literature on the middle schools is a little misleading; the teachers, notably the principals and deputies, not the students, appeared to us to define the school climate.

The schools are indeed adult-defined and adult-directed, the rhetoric notwithstanding. Imposed discipline is therefore extremely tight, not only in the statements of school policy which, due to the enthusiasm for litigation, are legalistic in tone but also in practice. Schools are rule-governed or rule-dominated institutions and this fact gives rise to questions which need addressing about self-determination, decision-making, democratic citizenship and active learning versus passive acceptance of rule-based structures. Are these schools for as well as of democracy? We do not wish to beg but raise the question of the social goals and values of the school. Given the complex and sometimes conflicting demands on it, this issue seems to us to require careful analysis. Is the school for the young adolescent primarily an academic training centre and a vehicle of imposed moral authority, or a focal point for developing adolescent interests, values and lifestyles? What kind of social responsibilities and roles are being prepared for? Why is there such strong emphasis on education as a process of transmission, on imposed order and on testing as the instrument for assessing performance? Much of this is doubtless a reaction to the "laxness" and "poor performance" of the 1960s and 1970s and the philosophy of control and direction in the middle years of schooling is also that of the major national reports. Given the declared commitment to child-centred philosophy in the Maryland, middle school policy statements and, in both Maryland and Minnesota, the expressed commitment of many educators to progressive educational values, these mechanisms of control seem to be insufficiently related to fundamental educational goals. Educational leaders in both States are very conscious of these dilemmas, commenting on the lack of identity of the junior high school and the function of order in middle schools being to "keep children tame" in response to parental disengagement from their children. Senior school administrators find themselves responding to conflicting pressures, summarised by one who remarked: "Within the past three to five years the middle school has become a back-to-basics, test-dominated machine. Set up to follow developmental goals, it has changed as pressure from the public followed publication of the test scores."

THE SCHOOLS IN THEIR COMMUNITIES

Although there is a considerable mythology surrounding the American school in its relationships with the local community, schools are indeed more than a symbol of local property values, local mores and community aspirations. The continuance of the localised tradition, of "possession" including administrative appointments, finance and sense of ownership is a reminder of long-standing hostility to central dominance. This tradition remains strong, despite, or more likely because of its mythical elements, and it conditions expectations of and responses to State and Federal initiatives. In Maryland, for example, a local school board was quoted as saying to the State: "Give us more money; until you do, keep out of our policies". The schools are very evidently a reflection and embodiment of local communities and are expected to serve their interests: the common school is a local community school, the principal is the people's, not the State's, employee.

On the other hand, "localism" is frequently not in evidence in procedures within the school. Schools originated locally in many parts of the country but have come increasingly under the sway of "centralistic" factors: State requirements, for example for graduation; regional accreditation procedures; statewide and national testing; uniform characteristics of teacher education (State certificates); statewide and national economic policies and forces; the response to population mobility; the impact of public communications systems; the roles of professional associations; the influence of national programmes, be they economic, ideological or educational; national reports. School consolidation is still continuing and, following population shifts, is further evidence of the move away from localism. Integration and busing have contributed to the break-up of local communities and resulted in the school becoming a "distant" institution in some respects. The role of State Boards and Departments of Education has steadily grown, as they have evolved from their earlier functions of gathering statistics, regulating professional and school practice and supervising performance and their constitution as bodies of ex-officio professionals, to agencies of educational leadership either selected by the community or nominated by state governors. The relationships between State Boards and Department officials and the local School Districts are beyond the scope of our report but it is clear that the localistic tradition, through some 16 000 school boards, is under growing challenge from powerful and authoritative State agencies. Maryland, for example, has what is statutorily one of the most powerful State Boards in the country and in both States vigorous professional leadership is evident in the succession of State commissions, reports and programmes.

It is, nevertheless, a striking feature of the American middle or junior high school, by contrast with its equivalent in centralised systems, that its general character is still largely a result of local definitions and support. The "middle years" are organised in different ways, which reflect local "logistics", a euphemism for politics-economics, as much as "pedagogy" or national or state policies. Some administrators, for example Superintendent Richard Green, Minneapolis, argue that this does not matter since organisation is of no particular significance, but programmes and tests are, and these are both state-determined. Professional educators and particularly local and state administrators have very much to be community relations specialists, judging the changing climate of opinion, assessing local movements and balancing interests. State-wide testing suits the public, at present, and policies transcending local boundaries are acceptable. But staffing and resource levels and even patterns of schooling express local preferences and readiness to pay. The professionals may consequently be inclined to shrug their shoulders over matters which, in other systems, receive lengthy and detailed analysis.

Relationships between schools and their local communities embody the results of a long historical struggle between the grass-roots democratic principle of local or community, that is, public control and responsibility, including finance and management, on the one hand, and, on the other, the professional principles of the universality of knowledge and the authority of the trained expert. But this takes different forms in different States. In Maryland, for example, we were informed that, while historically and by statute the local school systems are arms of the State and the State Superintendent can still veto a local Superintendent's appointment, the reality is that local boards have grown in power. Nationally there is a changing balance of forces within "the public". The weight and power of the three main partners, districts or counties, State and "Washington", have changed and keep changing. In recent times, the States have become more influential vis-a-vis districts in respect of programme planning and the Federal Government has a powerful say in certain rather narrowly-defined areas such as special education, minority rights and equality, vocational education, promotion of excellence in the national (defence) interest. The important differences between States that persist are due sometimes to historical factors, sometimes to political sensitivity, sometimes to economic forces. In the "Scandinavian" States in the mid-North, the State is more interventionist, but must in the case of Minnesota also contend with the historical realities and sensitivities of the rural areas. To illustrate: there has been a reduction of the number of school districts from over 4 000 a few decades ago to 434 in 1982, but nevertheless, this is still almost twenty times more than Maryland's 24 districts for a State of approximately the same size of population. Population density plays a major role in this, but so also does the enormous difference in social-geographical mobility between the State of Maryland as a whole and the major part of the State of Minnesota. The relationships between schools and their local communities are often subtle and it is best to see policy issues as a focus or nexus of interacting and shifting forces expressing diverse community and professional interests.

Other changes pose important issues for consideration when assessing policy towards the common school: the constraining effects of urbanisation, commuting parents and social and geographical mobility on the involvement of the community in the school. The abyss between the "credo" of caring and involvement, on the one hand, and the daily realities of urban and suburban neighbourhoods on the other, challenges the school to assume wide roles, in health care, moral development and socialisation. In other words: is the "common school" in the usually accepted, localistic and community-organic sense possible in the rapidly changing urban and suburban communities? A new paradigm seems to be developing to correspond with these changing realities. School-community relations seem to us to be in a condition of flux where the myths of the past have their part to play in achieving social and personal integration but may also stand in the way of a critical appraisal of just what the community school of the future is to be like.

School Boards are the main instrument through which the community exerts its power at the local level. No professional educators sit on them, but representatives of the community do, including parents, business people and "respectable citizens". The School Board can seem to be all-powerful and may be feared by teachers, whereas on the other hand, the lack of professional competence teachers sometimes attribute to it is an occasional cause of tensions and misunderstanding. The principal acts as "interlocutor" for the school in contacts with the Board: direct contacts with teachers are not desired. The power of the principal is, consequently, reinforced but there is also risk of conflicting roles being imposed on the principal. In smaller districts, the Board, or at least some of its members, is omnipresent and inclined to meddle in the everyday affairs of the school. Part of the principal's role in such a situation is to visit and telephone Board members to keep them out of classrooms! In these instances, it seems to us that the balance between localistic democracy and professionalism is too far tilted towards the former. Perhaps the residual powers at the State level, mentioned above, need to be brought more into play. We question whether Boards in practice fulfill the role of representing the community. The work is rather time-consuming and restricts active membership to a select group of citizens who, because of their free time, or social position, may not typify the community. The principle of local, representative government in education has to be studied, pragmatically, in context, for its effects and in relation to other principles both of school management and of participatory decision-making. We must keep in mind enormous differences in the size of school districts. Thus, in Minnesota in 1980/81, 71 districts had fewer than 300 pupils and 10 had more than 10 000; 65 per cent of all school districts had fewer than 1 000 pupils. Those variations forbid any general statement as to the role Boards play in linking schools and communities, but, in combination with the demographic and other social realities we have already discussed, they do bring into question the very meaning of the Board as a local organisation.

We did not hear much about Parent-Teacher Associations despite the frequent references to them in the literature on local or community participation in schooling. Do they really play an important role at the level of the individual school, or is it rather at a higher "political" level that their influence in terms of educational policy and practice is most felt? In documents such as the Five Year Plan for the Minneapolis Public Schools (1982) the term "P.T.A." seems to be missing from the Chapter "Parent/Student/Citizen Involvement in School Affairs" (13). On the other hand, both in Minnesota and in Maryland, at the school and district level, emphasis is given to the joint responsibility schools and parents have for children's education. To take but one example of many, the Parent Handbook of the Board of Educaton of Charles County, Maryland, not only provides copious information to parents but invites their participation, individually and collectively, for example through PTAs in supporting the education system of the county.

Leaving aside competitive sport and other "interscholastic" events, which Maryland middle schools discourage, participation by community and citizens in the life of the school seems to depend on the initiative and ambitions of the people concerned. Despite the invitations and exhortations of the educators, we encountered little real participation in the daily life of schools and only once or twice saw any outsider or parent in a school. The situation may very well be different in elementary schools. As do the Maryland County and school documents, the Minneapolis Five-Year Plan states clearly the basic rationale: "Recognising that the most important aspect of citizen involvement is the one-to-one relationship between a parent and a school regarding the child's educational achievement..." (page 77). The Plan goes on to specify "specific action items;...to increase school/home contacts". Evocative also are the rank order placings on the criterion of "ideal involvement in educational decision-making" cited in the Minnesota Dialogue on Education: in the views of the "general population" respondents, parents rank highest, followed rather closely by teachers and local school boards. Business and Federal Government close the list (14). Columbia, in Howard County, Md., provides what, for us, is a rare example of a planned attempt to relate the school to the surrounding community. This is a wholly new town, where educational planning was given major emphasis by the private developers from the outset (15). Nearly all children live within walking distance of a primary and middle school; parents are invited to come and visit the school and numerous events are organised for the community. But apart from the planned and favourable urban outlay (traffic kept outside the town, shops, schools, public services within walking distance), the composition of the population including many young couples with children, rather high incomes and a good level of education, strongly favours the active involvement of parents in school life. Elsewhere, for example in urban Minneapolis, where the physical and social conditions for active citizen involvement are not unfavourable and where the political tradition is another factor, citizen participation presents a "spotty" image. Under these circumstances, it is legitimate to raise questions about how the principles of community involvement through parent participation are working in practice and especially in those areas where conditions for participation are, on the face of it, less favourable.

Although the data are not strictly comparable, there appear to be interesting differences between the two States visited with regard to public support for the school. According to the Minneapolis Citizens League Report, Rebuilding Education to Make it Work (May 1982), "Gallup Poll ratings of public schools declined from 1974 to 1981". Maybe there is a cause-effect relationship with another finding, that "Scholastic Aptitudes Test scores have declined for the last 18 years" (16). Similar developments are, in the same report, mentioned for the State of Minnesota. Declining public support is likely to reflect the demographic considerations we adduced before. In Minnesota, only 17 per cent of all households have children in school. Support, on this reasoning, may be expected to be most positive in those areas where the population as a whole and the school population keep growing, that is, the relatively well-to-do suburbs of major agglomerations or prosperous commuter belts. Where resources are constrained, another factor affecting public support is relevant. A growing number of constituencies are competing for public funding; environmental concerns, senior citizens, action groups for improved housing, welfare programmes. In Maryland, a rather different picture emerges from recent Gallup Poll findings: "When asked if they would be willing to pay more taxes if the local public schools said they needed more money, Marylanders said "yes" -- almost two to one (17). The citizens also gave their schools a higher than national average rating. Explanations for such findings must take into account factors such as levels of education among respondents, sex and ethnic differences and income levels and the like. These are not our immediate concern. What is important to address is the maintenance of high levels of public support for the tax-supported school in a situation where the balance could tip the other way. Those responsible for the public schools must therefore devote far more energy than those in centralised systems or where citizenship participation is not a tradition to pursue policies that keep the community happy with education.

In the circumstances just outlined, it might be expected that private schooling is, or could become, a real threat to the common public school. Despite a steady growth in private schooling relative to public schooling, and it is rapid in some places, the prevailing view is that the future continues to lie with the public school. The question of public-private schools may be expressed in two slightly different ways:

a) The future of second level education lies with the school as a publicly supported and controlled institution, remaining in form, management and funding much as it is now with its elaborate apparatus of extended functions and roles, its surrounding myths, its ambivalent relationships with the community and its frequent attempts to reform itself from within;

b) The publicly funded and controlled school has an assured future as the key agency in the future education of the young adolescent, and it will become an objective of coherent State and national policies to "regularise" the school in respect of management, finance, curriculum, pedagogy and performance.

Either way, we are struck by the relative failure of the deschoolers, voucherites and privatisers, to make significant inroads in conceptual, organisational or financial terms. The historical continuity of the public school is easily demonstrable and a bulwark against structural reform of any kind. As to whether the forces noted above, new technologies and new views about knowledge-based social systems, will significantly change the institutional pattern of public schooling appears doubtful to us and this is not mainly for pedagogical but for social reasons. The public school is an extremely convenient and useful social institution: custodial, disciplining of youth, relatively inexpensive (true costs are often hidden) and compliant teachers. That is, it meets the pragmatic test. There is a definite move towards one of the often affirmed qualities of a private school education, emphasis on the organic quality of school life, not only in the sporting and social arenas but in scholastic achievement and in the highly-structured moral codes expressed through sets of school rules which imply, even when they cannot command, a strict and unified order. By making the public school more of a total education institution, which is responsive to public pressure, education authorities at one and the same time demonstrate that there is no need for private schools and that they are capable of rising to whatever challenge the community is able to present.

Private schools seem not to be, therefore, a significant option even for middle-class parents well able to pay the bills. There are, however, developments within the public school itself which might be seen as quasi-privatisation, at least in the sense that major alternative or additional and selective elements have been introduced. One such example is the "magnet school" which, as we observed in Minnesota, aims to provide a high quality specialist programme for students possessing specific talents. Another is the provision of additional benefits, such as busing to magnet programmes in Montgomery County, Maryland. These are typical examples of how the public school system can provide "extras" for selected groups. Such developments raise a question. Will the public school, offering additional or alternative, sectionalising and diversifying programmes within its own walls, serving as a base for specialist programmes undertaken elsewhere, and actively bringing in the diverse interests of "business" and "community", retain its proclaimed character as the people's school, offering equally valid, common and worthwile educational experiences for all? We do not pose this as a merely rhetorical question and we note some dilemmas. For example, it was suggested that lack of diversity in schooling is a major cause of lack of interest. Parental dissatisfaction with the mores and standards of public schools, coupled with generous government grants have, in some OECD countries, notably in Australia, resulted in strong parent moves towards the private sector. On the other hand, in the American setting, while there seems not to be this "flight", there is undoubtedly a tension over how far the public school can meet legitimate, if conflicting, community expectations. The "magnet" idea is a good one, educationally, but does not every child have "talents" to be nurtured?

One way ahead in this situation is perhaps that being pioneered in some States and school districts. Thus, in Minnesota, the "PER Law of 1976, (Planning, Evaluation and Reporting) involves citizens in identifying educational goals and establishing the procedures necessary to accomplish them". The Law was one of the outcomes of the Accountability Project funded by the Minnesota Council on Quality Education in 1973. In the wake of the Law, committees composed of parents, administrators, teachers, students, and other community members made recommendations and produced reports on a number of subjects. The Minneapolis Five-Year Plan proposes a variety of ways in which citizens can and should be involved in providing volunteer services in the schools, although the overall picture as to this remains "spotty". In Maryland, voluntaryism is strong with some 50 000 persons willing to help in schools across the States. Such volunteers help contribute to the proper resourcing and servicing of education, acknowledging that schools and school staff alone cannot meet all needs. It also identifies the public with "its" schools. It seems, however, fair to say that, inasmuch as we could judge, citizens' involvement in the business of the schools is on the whole confined to specific, rather marginal domains: helping out here and there, planning excursions or a social event. It is uncommon in all that has to do with the business of teaching and learning in the direct sense.

The rapidly increasing loss by families of the ability to provide children with adequate occasions for social learning and for family life tout court leads to increasing demands on schools to take over these functions. The public school is, on the one hand, expected to improve performance of all students in narrowly-defined "basics", on the other, it is to be the catch-all community salvation agency. Parents are less and less involved with children, especially in the suburbia where both work and spend much time in commuting. The incidence of single-parent families is also a major factor. What seems to follow is a demand on schools to impose on children behavioural codes that do not necessarily correspond to family and community practice. We have drawn attention to the tendency of schools to impose minimal and uniform codes that keep risks to a minimum and consequently restrict children's initiative. These are doutless a cautious recognition of the vulnerability of the regimen of the school to legal challenge and of the drift in society at large towards the codification of relations and behaviours in institutions within a broad framework of administrative law. Out of self-protection schools are led to lay down strict and detailed regulations that avoid the risks mentioned but also forestall the taking of personal responsibility. We saw many examples of legalistic student behavioural codes. An observation was made in the Minneapolis Department that in terms of school-community relations everything imaginable has been tried out, without much success. A more positive assessment of the success of school-community co-operation was given in Maryland. Such variable experience still leaves open the question: should the school concentrate on activities in which it is thought to be best, that is, the teaching business, thereby leading to a reduction in outreach activities? For reasons we have already discussed, matters cannot be that simple! Community problems that the school may try to keep outside its front door manage to force their way in through the back door. The school, against its will, is obliged to cope. Thus, there is an unresolved conflict between the formal mission and informal expectations and roles.

We were, naturally, keen to know about the solutions proffered to the dilemmas and tensions we have discussed. First of all, it needs to be reiterated that the multiple, often conflicting, demands laid on the school during the middle years are the reality within which educators must immerse themselves. We were impressed by the skill and wisdom displayed in analysing these dilemmas and tensions and in constantly developing, trying out and implementing programmes designed to meet defined needs -- community defined needs, not professional self-interest. School and community partnership, in order to achieve core educational objectives as well as wider educational aims, was a major theme. Partnerships are not necessarily nor desirably expressed in a written contract but in order to be workable, details of co-operation must be specified. This is recognised in the Maryland County and School Handbooks, in the State office, and in Minnesota by such devices as the Minneapolis Five-Year Plan, in its stress on a detailed definition of responsibilities of partners. Homework is the most visible day-to-day evidence of the co-operation of school and family in core educational matters. Schools ask from parents explicit commitment as to supervision and assistance. But, increasingly, families are unable to meet these responsibilities. The potential for misunderstanding is great, with each partner placing blame on the other. The quest for partnership continues, nevertheless, and parents are constantly reminded of their responsibilities by the educators.

It may be argued, and certainly has been by American educators, that as a result of its very attempt to offer too many services, the school has become a mini-society that does not need the outside world and only occasionally lets it in as a visitor or spectator. It cannot, as a consequence, enter into a genuine constructive partnership over educational goals and the definition of school and society relationships. Moreover, it is alleged, by pursuing so many community goals, the school loses its specific identity and sense of purpose. The solution, here, might seem to lie in the efforts currently under way to reach a new, national consensus on clearly defined and delineated educational roles for the school, roles whose performance necessarily entails a rethinking of the partnership principle at the local level. This quest for a consensus was nowhere more apparent than in the formulated philosophy of the Maryland middle schools. These institutions have been conceived, idealistically, as rich and creative educational environments, so structured, organised, staffed and resourced as to provide every opportunity for adolescent development through well-regulated educational programmes. At the same time, they offer themselves as the schools of the community and their policies are to be those of the community. Not surprisingly, the practice cannot always match the ideal. Perhaps, in attempting to articulate the highest aspirations of the community and to bring into a single educational institution such a wide array of social, cultural and educational concerns -- the school as a microcosm of community life and values -- the educators have over-reached themselves. The very openness to community values has produced the rigidities of curriculum and testing we discussed earlier. The attempt to make the schools comprehensive life institutions has meant that, notwithstanding the huge investment in "the basics", standards have not, nationally at any rate, reached the hoped for levels. The relationship of the school to society is as real an issue for the contemporary junior high school and middle school as it was more than seventy years ago when John Dewey wrote his School and Society (18).

THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

With the introduction of comprehensive schooling for the younger adolescent in European societies went the argument that a change of school oragnisation, abandonment of premature selection for second level schooling and hence social allocation and such principles as equality of opportunity and the responsiveness of schools to changing social realities, would all be meaningless unless definite changes in curriculum and pedagagy occurred. These changes, however, have proved extremely difficult to achieve. The weight and authority of the academic institution in secondary education and institutional limitations of time and resources, and the culture and training of teachers, are among within-school constraining factors. Wider social factors include the expectations of schooling held by large sectors of the population and the contradictions in the roles and functions ascribed to schools. If European experience has moderated professional expectations of what can be changed in curriculum and pedagogy, the longer history of the common school in America, including substantial experiments with curriculum innovation that considerably predate the post-Sputnik development projects, give rise to a more optimistic view. Certainly the middle school movement has proclaimed its determination to find a new and distinctive "curriculum way" between the elementary and high school. The junior high is more clearly influenced by high school practice, but again has attempted to establish something different from scaled-down academic and vocational courses. Both institutions provide a great deal of interest in curriculum terms, but neither would claim to have resolved some of the persistent problems associated with the attempt to be both"'common and different" in a unified curriculum structure.

The conventional definition of the curriculum, which to American educators, as to their counterparts in other countries, often means "instructional programme", that is, timetabled, syllabus-defined, textbook-structured, subject-based learning and teaching tasks, is rather narrowly conceived. This has had to be complemented or even replaced altogether in curriculum studies since it ignores or underplays much that is learnt and taught in and through schools. We were therefore surprised to find curriculum defined in this managerial and narrowly instrumental way. One could change the "instructional programme" yet still leave untouched much of students' learning experience in school. Moreover, preoccupation with the technology of instruction including textbooks and tests of achievement is, we believe, one of the explanations for continuing public and professional anxiety over the performance of schools. This narrow conception of curriculum:

a) Obscures a considerable part of school reality, the so-called "hidden curriculum"; the students' experience of learning, the values of alternative pedagogies which focus on inter-personal relations, values and self-initiated and managed learning;

b) Limits consideration of the wider educational role of the school and may even help explain relatively poor performances. The argument here is that the "direct attack" of objectives-based instruction plus frequent testing may be counterproductive and that a broader, more open, educational approach may produce better test results as well as better all-round education;

c) Reduces teachers to semi-robots. It need not do so, but in practice the risk is there; syllabus and test-bound teaching based on predigested texts and tests has its appeal to the less highly motivated and committed teacher and student.

The basic difficulty for our purposes here in adopting this narrower and instruction-bound concept of curriculum is that it would prevent us from addressing some fundamental issues in the schooling of the young adolescent. We therefore use a broader definition, consistent with contemporary developments in curriculum theory and research. Taking the broader definition, we can address aspects of schooling which seem to us to be of central importance for our analysis. We think of curriculum, therefore, as both a helper or chart of learning provided by or through the agency of the school in pursuit of its educational goals, and as the learning experiences of the student insofar as the school is their stimulus or setting.

Curriculum purposes, aims, goals, values, objectives

We have already noted that purposes and objectives are formally stated through official documents apparently widely communicated to parents and students as well as school staffs and treated as part of what a school should be addressing, that is, they are explicit, and not, as in some other systems, tacit. But, being formally stated, are they necessarily acted upon? Or if acted upon, with what emphasis and priority? On the face of it, explicitness about objectives for learning is useful pedagogically, managerially and in community relations. The breadth of the statements is impressive and, in general, they give emphasis to the all-round personal as well as academic development of all youth. Yet, this breadth is sometimes belied by the narrowness of much of "instruction". Thus, such frequently affirmed objectives, for both middle and junior high schools, as active learning, individual responsibility and co-operative work, are, it seems to us, jeopardised rather than enhanced by the dominance of testing. Aesthetic, moral and other personal aspects of development highlighted in objectives are submerged under the emphasis given to "academic basics" in the planning, organisation and implementation of the course offerings. Moreover, some of the functional objectives are not stated at all, for example, social allocation and positioning, and social acquiescence. We see the value of a goals-based analysis of the curriculum and would like to see examples of extending this analysis to real functions as well as liberal aspirations and to the full range of school learnings as well as the formal programmes.

The influence of a tradition of general education in the common school remains strong, at any rate in the rhetoric of schooling in the middle years. What this comes to in customary practice is that an academic model of the curriculum prevails in the formal presentation of learning. This is evident in course outlines, texts, timetables, tests and discursive statements about what is important in schooling. Essentially, the core of the curriculum for the junior high and middle schools is defined by reference to the discrete, basic subjects of Mathematics, Science, Language (English), Social Studies. Other subjects and subject areas are taught and often cover a broad spectrum, but our impression is that they are given increasingly a secondary place in many schools. Thus, the core is stated as: i) separate, unrelated subject areas; ii) subject-defined sequences of content and learning; iii) subject-defined levels (tests).

The school's role, and hence one of the "real" objectives, whether stated or not in these terms, is held to be to transmit this core, not to face up to the implications of many of the lists of school objectives which would require the redefining and probably reconstructing of that core of specified, academic subjects and a curriculum defined in moral, social, aesthetic and physical as much as in academic terms. But there is a second curriculum model, to be defined by reference to the traditional practice in the United States of "tracking", that is, the core is taught to all students but at different levels, and for many students the primary definition of the curriculum is not the academic core per se but a particular track (academic, or general; pre-vocational or quasi-vocational, including "shop", business studies, home economics; minority, e.g. low-attaining black or Indian students; special, i.e. various handicaps or disabilities including emotional disturbance). The problem of defining the post-elementary school curriculum has frequently been addressed in the history of American education and numerous attempts have been made to come to grips with a simple but fundamental point: designed in its origins for a small, intellectually-inclined minority, the secondary curriculum has perforce become an instrument of universal or mass secondary education. It is not our task or within our competence to address this debate in all its complexity but we do want to pinpoint one issue. How is the present drive, at school level as well as in national reports and State policy initiatives, towards a flat, narrowly or precisely defined set of universal cognitive learnings to be reconciled with:

a) The schools' wide-ranging, broadly-defined statements of aims, goals and objectives;

b) The diverse interests, values and commitments to education of American youth and their parents;

c) The functions of selection, social positioning and role allocation that schools in fact perform, in part because of in-built inequalities in communities and school districts?

Traditionally, not only tracking but also the elective system has been proffered as part of the solution to the problem of mass schooling. In addition to required courses all students are to have access to a range of options and electives. This is the established norm, although more prevalent in high schools than in middle or junior high schools. What is changing is a reduction, or a strong lobby favouring reduction, of the elective element.

This is most evident in several of the national reports, but is also apparent in the State documents. The reasons given are financial as well as educational, yet the reduction of options and electives could well have educational advantages in requiring a re-appraisal of the core. What is of interest to us, at this juncture, is that such a reduction, accompanied by a strong cognitive thrust in and through academically-defined subjects seems, however, to be reducing the school's capability to meet diverse needs. What seems required is a readiness to rethink the concept of general education for all, and to redesign the common curriculum upon a different base. There is more interest shown in this in some of the national reports, for example Paideia (19), than we found evidence of in the two State systems.

The fact that the curriculum is consistently articulated or reduced into specified learning tasks, packages and programmes, structured by objectives, texts and tests gives to the curriculum process a strong managerial and technological orientation. This was defended as evidence of the school's readiness to respond to criticisms of "laxness" and "mediocre achievement". On the other hand, a number of commentators have drawn attention to the dangers of this both for student learning and for teacher professionalism and have argued that the explanation for it is not the "failure" of the school, in the past, but the rise of big business, including public business: "Consider...the extent to which curriculum work...has moved in the direction of implementing massive, teacherproof, instructional systems designed by major corporations, research and development agencies, and other conglomerates. Such curricula provide elaborate, managerially-oriented systems which allow for little input by teacher or student" (20). Curriculum delivery, as we observed it, is primarily whole-class instruction. Except in practical classes, including hands-on computers and special education units, we were presented with relatively little evidence of student-initiated and student-organised learning or of teachers acting as organisers learning with small groups, projects and resource-based activity. This calls for explanation since the provision of resources, and the quality and variety of teaching spaces are, by comparison with many OECD countries, of a higher order. The adoption of an instructional model, with a strong emphasis, now, on teaching towards the test and within a more restricted framework than in the recent past, does, of course, create difficulties for self-managed, small-group learning, except for the already mentioned "special groups". By virtue of the emphasis on academic core, curriculum delivery in our view gives undue emphasis to narrower and more instrumental views of curriculum and learning; within that core, knowing that takes precedence over knowing how. Moral, social and civic education is, it has been suggested, unduly factual and not experiential.

Student performance, outcomes and assessment

The curriculum trends we have observed and commented on are crystallised in the pervasive impact of performance testing. The major operative curriculum objective is a specified performance or set of performances indicated in test scores. Notwithstanding philosophical statements in brochures, the experiences of learning, of school life, and of the very processes of development and inter-personal relationships in adolescence are, it seemed to us, made subordinate to outcome measures. Learning is thus in danger of becoming predominantly a matter of preparing for, rehearsing, testing, reviewing and for teachers and aides marking tests.

We question this, educationally, in terms of a) the wide and diverse range of goals, values and purposes of the curriculum; b) the quality of the experience of taking tests and being tested; c) the effectiveness and efficiency of an educational programme that gives so much time to tests where a whole battery is individually taken; d) available evidence regarding improvements consequent on testing; e) the opportunity costs of testing; f) the possible longer-term effects of testing in inducing, for example, a paper-and-pencil mentality; g) the alternatives that are or might be available. Our concern that the testing tail may be wagging the educational dog is evident from such a list.

The reasons for the apparent prevalence of testing as a pedagogical as well as an accountability instrument have to be considered. Basically, these seem to be twofold: i) concern over the allegedly declining quality of student performance, which should be questioned since it was not evident in the States we visited; ii) a long-standing cultural belief that pencil-and-paper tests are the best method of assessing student performance, coupled with continuing development of a test-technology which has acquired its own momentum. We suggest that, by not focusing on the purposes and goals of general education, the realities of student experience, the scope of the curriculum conceived as the whole set of experiences of students in school, and the human qualities of learners, the prevalent assessments of student performance are quite inadequate.

Ascertainable student activity might be more effectively written into comprehensive student profiles, which incorporate a limited range of pencil-and-paper tests but are centred on transactions between students and teachers whereby a rounded picture of performance emerges. We would like to set the arguments about accountability and measured performance in that context rather than have things the other way round.

By contrast with a decade ago, the developmental orientation has shifted from the subject-specific, high-visibility, externally-funded, specialist curriculum development team and the regional labs and university centres to:

a) national policy reports;

b) accountability and testing as organs of a new institutional technology;

c) texts;

d) computer software;

e) the analysis of teaching skills and the verification of professional qualifications.

In addition, district or state committees are established to undertake inquires, such as the Maryland Quality Teaching Commission, or there are small innovation centres, as in the Minnesota Quality Program.

Teachers participate, to a degree, in curriculum development but from available evidence we regard this as a marginal activity, largely incidental both to the application of the instructional and text-focused model and to conditions-of-service agreements about teachers' roles. A central issue in the international debate on quality emerges here. Is curriculum development, conceived as a form of improvement of the processes as well as the contents of teaching and learning, of central importance in attaining a higher quality education for all students? If the answer is yes, how should we regard curriculum development; as a professional enterprise largely pre-empted by the conclusions of national "blue riband" committees; as an artefact of test construction, the definition of behavioural objectives and measurable outcomes, and the commercial production of text and other media resources, or as an integral part of processes focused at the school level on the conditions and qualities of learning, the structure of knowledge and experience and the aims and values of our societies? It is difficult to see how the aspirations for the middle school in Maryland or for the junior high school in Minnesota can be satisfied unless the school itself and the school district are given, and supported in, a more direct curriculum role. Given the freedom of districts to set up and run their own schools it is ironic that central expression of that freedom, namely the planning, design, development, review evaluation and further development of the curriculum should be relatively uncommon. As a consequence, the school seems to have been displaced as a significant factor in curriculum making.

THE TEACHER AND THE SCHOOL

There is no shortage of reviews, reports and recommendations relating to all aspects of the teacher's selection, training, further professional development and career. It is encouraging to observe in these studies an image of the teacher as a highly-educated, well-paid, socially-regarded professional who needs high-order skills and understanding in order to perform the exacting tasks of teaching. The Maryland Commission on Quality Teaching is a State-level example. Challenging How Teachers are Educated, by Thomas Fox and published by the ERIC Clearing House on Teacher Education and the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (21), illustrates the strong professional interest in the subject of teacher development. Practically all of the recent national reports present an exalted version of the role teachers might play and consequently make high demands on their professional competence. Equally, however, there are stringent criticisms of their actual performance and demands for greater accountability, large salary differentials for merit and the "weeding out" of unsatisfactory teachers.

Despite this plethora of published material, our data directly on middle and junior high school teachers in the two States are patchy and we should need additional sources and a more intensive period of study in order to feel confident about our findings. Given the limitations of our study, we are able only to offer some provisional comments, and to pose tentative questions, in brief form:

Profile/age spread: the teachers now are, due to "demography", very largely the teachers who will be in service in fifteen years. An ageing teaching force is a potential problem for a major reform programme. How can in-service provision meet the need for professional renewal in a period of level pegging or reduced funding?

Selection/training/qualifications: teachers are now, as they have been for decades, almost at the bottom of the academic league table and even when they take higher qualifications these are often of a low standing. Can teachers of an adequate quality, commitment and level of initial training be brought into the profession? Will these qualifications match specific needs defined for the middle years of schooling?

Conditions and nature of employment: (for example, a 10-month/11-month contract); the instructional model is a natural correlate of limited and specified contract employment. What incentives are there for teachers to innovate and achieve? Would large salary differentials really meet the need? Could they be financed and what would be their effects on the moral and performance of teachers in the bottom part of the scale.

Socio-economic status: (for example, the need to do extra, often menial, jobs). The standing of teachers in the community and public esteem seems to be generally low. Yet the challenge to the school is of quite fundamental importance to the future of the country and the expectations held of teachers are staggering. Is internal differentiation, including high-merit pay, any kind of answer? Would it not depress the large majority in order to benefit the few?

Capabilities, as perceived by employers, peers, principals, public: Much is expected of and assumed about teachers. There is a paradox here since, at the same time, teachers are condemned for their real or supposed academic limitations and are accorded the modest social status already referred to. Furthermore, as noted above, by adopting an instrumental model and a limited conception of teaching, teachers confirm an impression that they are technical operatives rather than highly-skilled professionals. How is a true dialogue between teachers and the wider society to be opened up on these issues?

Can teachers be the agents of educational development and reform?

Despite the length of their formal education and training, for example, in Maryland 75 per cent of teachers by 1982 were beyond the master's degree or its equivalent (22), a richly-resourced educational environment and the drive towards qualitative improvement, teachers are not commonly regarded as the primary agents of educational development. Their role and even their self-image seems to be rather more that of the implementers of changes initiated outside the school and increasingly at the State level. Where this is challenged, as for example by teachers' unions, it still seems to be the case that development roles are vested in authority figures at the district and school level, notably principals, not the typical practitioner (23). Our analysis has suggested several explanations for this and, in particular, we have posed the question as to whether a more managerial, technologically-oriented change "from above" is not deskilling teaching. We would question whether it can have prospects of success equal to something more organic, participatory, and drawing on the experience and expertise of those working directly at the interfaces of learning and teaching. It seems to us that unless the whole drive for improvement of performance and the raising of educational standards focuses directly on a revitalisation of the school as the central educational agency with its own goals, values, intentions and life styles worked out, at school level and with reference to particular student populations, the goals of the reform will not be achieved. This is not to say that schools can or should be free-standing, autonomous units. In a sense, the teachers must be both instruments of policy and agents in its development.

The "top-down" style cannot take root unless teachers are directly involved; equally, the "bottom-up" style cannot become pervasive unless district, state and national structures are strong. Thus, the oft-drawn contrast between "top-down" and "bottom-up" can be over-played. The models of "agency" and "instrument" both have a place; goals and strategies and procedures of reform necessarily transcend the individualism of the school, and the effectiveness of reform necessarily rests on the commitments, values and active engagement of the teachers themselves. We think of reform as a process whose nature and direction are not only responsive to but are directly influenced by the quality of the teaching profession. This calls for some changes in how teachers are viewed, what they do, and their relationship with policy-makers, administrators, and the community. We now indicate some of the changes that our study has suggested would be desirable. All of them can be found in the literature on teacher education and staff development yet for various reasons, as often practical and local as ideological or consequent on an unthinking instrumentalism, they seem difficult to introduce or to be frustrated when attempted.

Staff and professional development programmes and needs: These are generally conceded to be inadequately or contentiously defined and provided for, and there is no consistency of practice. Occasional pupil-free days, minimal opportunities for secondment, teachers paying for their higher degrees -- these and other constraints, which in some cases reflect limitations of educational finance, lead us to question whether large-scale professional development is practically envisaged as a major factor in change.

Potential of teachers for leading educational reform: Despite the national reports and State policy expectations whose realisation calls for a massive commitment to reform by the teaching force, teachers are not in fact well placed, institutionally, to spearhead major reforms. This is not least because of the manner in which many principals act as bosses instead of educational leaders of active professional teams (see below). Also it is very difficult to see how teachers as a group, junior high school teachers especially, are to break the image of low-level instructors, purveyors of externally-manufactured materials and administrators and markers of bureau-made tests.

Possible reform of teacher education: Commissioner Randall of Minnesota quoted approvingly a Carnegie Foundation proposal for a four-year liberal arts degree plus a professional year. Teachers, she argued, lack a sufficient academic foundation and intellectual training. Despite the drawbacks of this model as experienced in the British arts/science degree followed by a professional year, for example, it has the merit of challenging the image of the teacher as merely instrumental or as a purveyor of other people's knowledge. It seems unlikely, however, that drastic change is possible as teacher education is surrounded by conditions-of-service agreements and a web of established practices militate against reform. There is a special issue facing junior high school teachers. They are trained either for elementary or secondary education; the majority are secondary-trained and see their advancement in secondary education (this seems not to be true of the teachers in Maryland, for whom the middle school has a career value). These teachers see themselves in subject instructional terms and their aspirations intensify this subject orientation. We wish to underline this as it seems to us that the creation of vigorous and highly-regarded programmes of schooling for the younger adolescent requires the closest possible attention to the teachers, their capabilities, education and training, interests, roles and status. We see a problem not only in the structure of schooling but equally in associated pre-professional and in-service education. Some teachers are an expanded version of the elementary class teacher; others are aspiring secondary specialists. A strong role model of the middle or junior high school teacher is discussed and alluded to in the literature but achieving it in practice is beset with difficulties. The emphasis given, in Maryland, to a dynamic, identifiable, task-specific middle school programme does seem to be helping to improve the teachers' role and self-image. Over time it could transform their standing and lead to significant changes in their education. The questions in Minnesota would seem to be how to make a valid career of junior high school teaching and how to strengthen teacher education so that it is genuinely focused on this stage of schooling and adolescent development. It is all too common for analyses of teacher education, in presenting a global set of recommendations, as for example in Challenging How Teachers are Educated (21), to overlook the need for precision and detail on specific ages and phases. The middle years of schooling seem to us to call for this, just because they are transitional in both senses: individual growth and development with the onset of puberty and the exploration of adolescent roles, and the traditional divide between elementary and secondary education. If our argument about the need to strengthen the role of the teacher in curriculum and pedagogy is correct, it follows that their education has to be rethought.

THE ORDERING, REGULATION AND CONTROL OF SCHOOL LIFE

We have cited earlier the numerous attempts being made to order or structure the life of the school firmly and consistently and in terms of clearly-stated educational goals. The schools we visited were not at all disorderly or directionless. In the discussions and through observations we were struck by the emphasis given to regulation, in respect both of curriculum and conduct. We have identified social factors leading to this emphasis and to its manifestation in the school curriculum and in tests and student assessments. Of particular interest is how these trends and factors come together in a role model of the school principal, supported by deputy principals. These people are perceived, and perceive themselves, as managers, as educational leaders and accountable to their communities for "running a tight ship". An understanding of them and their role is, in our view, crucial in any review of the policies, the prevailing ethos of, and the procedure for decision-taking in middle and junior high schools in the United States.

Evidently, the principal is a powerful and authoritative figure within the school and in dealings with parents and the local community. "Leadership" is on everyone's lips: it is expected of the principals and they are eager to provide it. This ranges from authoritarian and directive to democratic, from a narrow managerialism to broad-based educational leadership. Principals clearly saw themselves as in a position where they had to lead, out in the open and not from behind, the professional authority of subject specialists.

There are, as one should expect, dilemmas for principals. They are in authority, have authority, are charged with total site responsibility, hence the term "site principal", and are working in arenas where laws, regulations and administrative requirements, not only educational but health, welfare and safety, abound. They are, consequently, extremely exposed and vulnerable in a sceptical and critical climate. The principal must know and understand a lot, yet to be an effective leader, must voluntarily abrogate some of his or her power, share authority and work in partnership. This imposes role and relationship strains, which, not surprisingly, principals often seem to resolve by veering towards extremes. In the present public setting of schooling, the characteristic response seemed to us to lean towards the more authoritarian pole. This may be a relatively short-lived reaction to a perceived crisis of confidence in the quality of school work. Were it to become a durable trend, it would diminish rather than enhance the professionalism, initiative and creativity of the teachers. How the principal is to exercise strong leadership and at the same time help build up teacher professionalism is a crucial question in the debate over improving educational quality. The principal has to function primarily as an administrator even if educational leadership is the sought-for goal. Principals are buttressed by state and district rules and regulations of which they are custodian "on site"; principals act consciously within a legal framework, implementing a discipline code which has to be robust enough to withstand legal challenge; principals reside over institutions in which there is timetable rigidity, supervision of students' time and actions, and an elaborate apparatus of control through tests, all of which have the sanction of the authority of the school, of which the principals are symbols. Finally, principals are the main link with the community, the parents and the district office. All of this tilts the balance of school authority from the professionalism of teachers towards principals. Because the principal is primarily responsible for setting school goals, standards and requirements of institutional membership, is the one who administers the procedures which determine success and directs and imposes sanctions and rewards, the role is inevitably powerful even where the incumbent exercises it with a light touch. The principal is backed up by the authority of public school administration and of the State itself. We were interested in ways in which principals sought to exercise their roles with discretion, given the predicaments of power. The concentration of power in the principal, and in other defined authority figures in the system, superintendents and supervisors, is also a concentration of demand and expectation in a situation where very high performance is assumed and required. Yet the principal, as we were frequently informed, typically also urges the community to take its share of responsibility. In doing so, the community, it might seem, will want to assume greater power and control over the principal as well as the school. Similarly, the principal expects a high quality of educational commitment and achievement from school staffs. This can hardly be provided unless the teachers achieve higher standing and themselves exercise greater authority over school policy. What kinds of models of management and leadership look most promising?

No analysis of roles or of the effectiveness of leadership styles can be adequate unless principals' functions and those of the whole staff of the school are addressed together. We have challenged the instrumentalist style of teaching as the purveying of other people's ideas and knowledge and the role model of the teacher as a hired instructor. The most promising developments seem to us those which envisage the teachers as highly-educated, responsible professionals whose knowledge and authority contribute quite substantially towards school decision-making. The principal, on this analysis, gains much of his or her authority from a sharing of responsibility and the incorporation of teacher expertise and experience into an educational decision-making team. The principal, accordingly, needs to be in every sense part of the school, not a president sitting over it. Consequently, the selection, education, training and further professional development of principals ought not to be grounded in the role models of industrial management or military command. Whilst not disputing the need to cast far afield for relevant situations and experiences from which principals can learn, we do not see this tendency to decontextualise management and leadership as either useful or healthy. Part of the difficulty of improving the quality of the middle years of schooling lies in the definition and understanding of "educational quality". The most impressive principals we encountered were those who thought, spoke and acted reflectively as broadly-educated and experienced educators, who were able to share responsibility and power and relate to teachers and superintendents as colleagues in the exercise of shared professional tasks and responsibilities. By contrast, several others resembled Stephen Leacock's fabled horseman: mounting his steed and noisily riding off in all directions.

PARTICIPATION AND EQUITY

The junior high school or middle schools frequently have as a stated aim virtually 100 per cent effective participation by students in schooling, however "effective" may be defined. In practice, this means targets such as: full attendance; active engagement with the curriculum; a defined minimum level of performance; satisfactory in-school behaviour; active co-operation and collaboration with the home. But the experience of schooling, it is freely admitted, is that none of these targets is being achieved fully or even adequately, except in very favoured circumstances. Although attendance is compulsory throughout the junior high school or middle school age range, it may and often does fall 10 or 15 per cent short of this target; that is, one tenth to one sixth or seventh of students are irregular attenders or regular truants. As for active engagement with the curriculum, despite efforts to vary content, learning tasks, pacing, materials and other resources and teacher/student ratios, a significant but unspecified proportion of students are not actively engaged. Consequently, the performance standards, at the lower end, are very low indeed. The main evidence for this is to be found in:

a) national reports;

b) the surveys of the national assessment of educational performance;

c) local evidence given orally in interviews and in written reports.

The picture is not uniform, however, and many schools and school districts are on an upward curve in respect of the several dimensions of effective student participation. Positive achievement in the two State systems is correlated less with wealth and social background, although that is a tendency, than with well-planned and well-organised programmes that set clear goals and marshall resources and personnel to meet them.

There is a paradox in one of the major current trends: the insistence on a standardized curriculum with a strong focus on measured outcomes means that inevitably many students will fail. Why is this? Surely, it will be argued, the move towards criterion-referenced testing and the development of varied curricula, materials and learning programmes to meet individual needs are means of ensuring success, not failure. In practice and for various reasons, the diversity of pedagogy is more apparent than real in respect both of individual learners and subcultures. The schools cannot achieve success with certain groups of students whose personal targets and needs are, as it were, pre-empted by the whole mentality of achievement orientation, distant goals, means-ends rationalism and "objective" scales of performance. The strategy we have challenged throughout our report is, in other words, itself biased, an artefact of the technical-rational drive which is a dominant motif, although by no means the only one, of modern society. Thus, the key means adopted to raise average standards may confirm and even reinforce failure for significant groups of students. A serious issue of equity arises in a publicly-funded institution where attendance is compulsory and participation is enjoined.

The failing students also tend to have behaviour problems; often they come from broken or disturbed home backgrounds where parents are out of touch with the school and are often poor, unemployed and itinerant. School demands and expectations can thus become a compounding of existing social inequity and not a means of amelioration, as intended. A constellation of factors, working from infancy and throughout childhood and adolescence, militates against educational success. Student-centered schooling can therefore become a comfortable myth disguising what is in fact, and notwithstanding the best hopes and intentions, an inequitable and excluding reality. This is despite the most strenuous efforts to overcome deficiencies. We saw many impressive examples: in home-school relations programmes where schools went actively out into the community to reach all parents; special programmes for Indian children in Minnesota; State commission debates on the educational consequences of cultural pluralism in Maryland. It is in this context that Minneapolis has determined, on the basis of test scores, that some kindergarten-age children shall return for additional tuition and, if this is not adequate, repeat kindergarten during the next year. The argument put to us by Superintendent Richard Green was that early prevention or focusing on the problem of performance is necessary if children are to have any chance of keeping up and gaining later from school experience. This sounds plausible, except that it makes the questionable assumptions that there are indeed basic tools and techniques of learning that all adults need and will use in a hi-tech future, that they are those of basic literacy and numeracy programmes, and that a sufficiently vigorous grounding in the schools will overcome the social, cultural and economic constraints of the larger society. The argument put to us is that the schools can and must move in this direction at the kindergarten stage in order to have a continuing effect at the early adolescent stage when much of the drift away from education becomes apparent.

One alternative to the Green solution has been the so-called "alternative school", now generally abandoned as costly and relatively ineffective; another, still widely practised, is to build alternative programmes within the common school. On the face of it, in order to achieve equity and bring about the participation of children with substantial initial disadvantage, drastic alternative or variant approaches are required. This is not, however, the view of some to whom we spoke. The rigorous pursuit of an alternative policy, moreover, ultimately leads to the breakdown of the principles of the common school and the common curriculum. Here, it seems, is another of the dilemmas facing the American common school.

There is another possibility, which many schools are trying. It is the building of a structure of diagnosis, support and monitoring around every student, individually identified and encouraged. It comprises:

- -- early diagnosis
- -- early intervention
- -- strong pre-planned learning structures and planned variation in teaching styles
- -- special learning programmes focused on targeted areas of learning difficulty or need
- -- community outreach to draw in other community services and resources
- -- moral and psychological persuasion (of students, parents, families) to participate in learning (hence Richard Green's "you've got to be involved")
- -- constant monitoring, frequent evaluation and programme adjustment.

Carried on within the normal school and involving a high degree of shared experience as well as individual treatment, such an approach seems very promising. The school cannot afford to accept a high rate of non-participation in learning for reasons either of justice and equity or of social order. Yet the marginal unit costs increase rapidly as we get to the ninetieth percentile of the population. The economic costs of pursuing educational success are great, at this point, but the costs of not doing so are perhaps greater. There is much to be learnt, in this respect, from the American experience. Most of all, perhaps, there are lessons in the open recognition and resolute addressing of these problems. They are not being allowed to simmer away but form the focus of some of the most powerful interventions anywhere in contemporary education.

ISSUES FOR DEBATE

In this final section we pull together recurring themes in our review and offer them as an agenda of issues for debate. It is symptomatic of the dynamic situation in the education of the younger adolescent in America that in even a highly-selective study such as this one a wealth of issues and questions has emerged. For the sake of brevity, we have summarised and grouped them, to some extent following the sequence of our presentation but not being constrained by it.

A nation-wide debate and drive for reform

Both the debate and the drive for reform contain divergencies, not to say contradictions. These cannot be reduced to "problems" or "failures" within the school system; they embody the clash of interests, the diversity of institutions and the variety of cultures and inherent contradictions in society itself. More summaries and resumés and still further reports cannot resolve such matters. System-wide reforms in a democratic society will inevitably express, at one and the same time, different ends and serve different purposes even when all the cracks are papered over. They will not necessarily, even when thoroughly pursued as is happening in both Maryland and Minnesota, prove helpful to teachers and fulfill the generally-agreed objective of better quality education for all youth. Nevertheless, much can be done, at the State, district, school and classroom levels, to work towards new forms of consensus, based on carefully negotiated agreements about the numerous action proposals, ideas, criticisms and strategies, now jostling one another in the educational market place. This is an exercise in mutual understanding and practical reasoning which will be time-consuming and require more patience than many critics display. There is a plethora of reform proposals and a sense that they are too varied, too little pondered, and too little grounded in the daily realities of school and community life. A period of reflection, calm appraisal, considered debate, and mid- to long-term strategy planning could usefully ensue. The much talked-about crisis may be a case of a self-fulfilling prophecy. The issues have been opened up in a fury almost of self-criticism and upsurge of schemes of action, so that there are now opportunities to be taken by astute and wise educational leaders to make appraisals, to negotiate and to decide how to act in the face of so many demands and possibilities.

The United States is not faced with the introduction or early stages of a new, common school system, as is the case in some other OECD countries. It has in place a working system, one moreover which seems set to continue regardless of the current criticisms and proposals. The structures, institutions and culture of schooling are deep-rooted and durable. The sense of urgency seems to arise more from factors and considerations arising beyond the school. Yet there can all too easily be an intemperate and over-reactive response by school systems. It may be that many of the solutions, if they exist, will be found outside the school or by action which associates the school while not dominating school life. It is necessary, in our view, to involve the school in all this and not to treat it as an instrument for implementing numerous externally-contrived schemes. Consequently, there is a need to return to the question of the distinctive role of the school.

School for life, work, training or education?

Throughout our report, we have emphasized the duality of the school's role: helping to meet individual developmental needs of young adolescents; serving such social needs and requirements as citizenship education and laying the foundations for adult working life. In an open, plural society, characterised by rapid change and by diverse interest groups, it is inevitable that there will be uncertainty and ambiguity, not to say open conflict, in attempts to define and carry out programmes of schooling that respond to urgent needs and requirements. At the level of theoretical analysis, reconciliation is not so difficult. But in practice, things are different and we can think of school as having two principal clients, not one. This is the nub of the problem of determining a central role for schooling. Of course, adolescent and adult life, training, work, and education inform one other and are interrelated in numerous ways. But perspectives and viewpoints of them differ, often quite dramatically. To choose a policy path leading to reformed curriculum organisation of schooling and pedagogy is to declare a position on how the school should act in the face of numerous challenges and demands. Such a choice serves both to achieve a measure of clarity and to express a priority. It is undoubtedly a significant strength of the educational policies and practices we have been reviewing that such choices are being made and followed through in respect of the kinds of issues to which we are alluding. A path is being mapped through the territory that relates childhood to adulthood. At the stage of schooling we are addressing, this pathway is still mapped in terms of a philosophy of general, not vocational, education.

The relationships between the American junior high or middle school and the "world of work" are not in the forefront of either partner's concerns, at least as far as curriculum and pedagogy are concerned. Rather, they are one of the last issues likely to be raised. The general philosophy is that training for jobs is industry's business or that of the vocational high school. Dewey's proposals for a new philosophy and practice of education at all levels, giving prominence to "occupations" in the education of younger children and repudiating traditional dichotomies between "general-liberal" and "technical-vocational-manual" in adolescent education have had little impact on that state of mind and of affairs (24). On the other hand, the broad theme of partnership in defining school roles and carrying out tasks is everywhere apparent. In Maryland, this is demonstrated in the work of the Baltimore Greater Council, an association of enterprises which fosters their relationships with schools in order to facilitate an exchange of resources and services, to provide managerial and technical assistance to schools and systems and to enable learners to gain entrepreneurial skills. This Council also has a strong interest in the problem of reducing inequity in the fiscal domain not least in relation to a problem we have highlighted, viz. funding disparities between school districts (25). Similar ways of thinking about education-business relations are to be found in Minnesota. In the words of Commissioner Randall:

> We will encourage and solicit involvement and support of chambers of commerce, vocational co-operative centres, the Minnesota Education Association and the Minnesota Federation of Teachers, local business and industry, the AFL-CIO, community education and vocational education teachers, curriculum committees, and many other individuals and groups to develop creative ways in which we can make the school-business-industry-agriculture partnerships a reality throughout the State. (26)

In official documents at all levels pertaining to the schools' objectives a number of statements are made as to the function of preparing students for work. We also came across many initiatives at school and school district levels, aiming at establishing close relations with business and industry and at creating favourable conditions in the schools in terms of orienting students towards and preparing them for employment, although this is not perceived as a major goal in the middle years.

Junior high and middle schools usually require home economics and industrial arts to be taken for a limited number of hours, and some are active in community relations projects that give students direct experience outside the school. Within school, the objectives relate to social and individual learning and to acquiring experience with technology and its social significance. They are in no way vocational, although they may help young people in choosing their further course of study and even their future profession. At the senior high school level, home economics and industrial arts usually become electives.

On the other hand, information technology has forcefully made its entry into the school. Rapid, albeit uneven, progress has been made in equipping junior high schools and middle schools with information technology equipment. It seems, however, too early yet to assess the effects of this drive on the schools' effectiveness in educating their pupils for a future in which the meaning and value of work are likely to be very different from now.

Whether the goals of work-related "general" education are being attained is equally difficult to assess. No doubt, the home economics and industrial arts courses suffer from not being part of the basic curriculum. They are likely to suffer further drawbacks from the current trend to reinforce the role of the "basic" subjects, which seem to be defined in an excessive zeal for cognitive functions not related to experience in and out of school. The impressions remain that these practical subjects are only marginally related to the essence of the school.

Would it be unfair to suggest that these subjects and indeed everything that has a very direct bearing on future working life are seen as being part of the "frills": nice for the kids that they can spend part of their school day doing all kinds of pleasant yet rather useless things, but when matters become serious, these subjects do not count? We can immediately qualify our own question by noting the significant if isolated exception of business and commercial studies, where teachers and students alike seemed to be well-attuned to jobs, the labour market and working life. The concept of "general education", however, which underpins a large part of pedagogical practice and curriculum planning, is of another order. Although we do not wish to imply that the function of education in the junior high or middle school is not all-round development rather than a narrow and utilitarian preoccupation with real or supposed "future work requirements", we would like to raise the issue of the place of working life in schooling. This is not necessarily a matter of vocational training, whether through occupational-specific or general pre-vocational skills, since school and work relations can themselves form a part of general education. The need is for a new concept and pattern of general education, which, on the one hand, incorporates many of the traditional values, such as intellectual development, training in skill, which in turn serve as tools of learning and the shared experience of the major domain of human experience and, on the other, relates to the dramatic forces of modern society, its science, technology, eonomic changes, value crises, and the several other factors that are visibly transforming ways of life. The school is facing a severe challenge. Can it retain its claim to be a universal, common institution which is able to live up to its aspirations to provide a suitable and rewarding, revitalised general education for everyone, or must the goals of education for all be sectionalised, leading to a retreat from a common culture, common citizenship, towards the construction of a new set of quite diverse institutions and programmes? The work-preparation/training model seems to point in this direction, as does the classical division between schools and programmes according to differentials like "ability", "interest" and "sub-cultures". The American middle school and junior high school are still pursuing the no less classical goal of something resembling a common, unitary programme. That is, life chances and life paths are not accepted as set hard by the early adolescent years. It seems that the quest to retain and to revitalise the common school remains but there is uncertainty, not to say confusion, over its fundamental mission. Progress might be made by reaffirming the primacy of education and not welfare, custodial care, community recreation and entertainment or job training in the mission of the school, and working out its bearing in terms both of defined educational values and purposes and the character of the living, working environments of the schools in their local settings. This is to re-emphasize our remarks that the school itself needs to be strengthened as an agency of review, evaluation and development and that the guidelines at State and District level should retain and develop a broad educational philosophy.

Knowledge and the future

The traditional conceptualisation of school knowledge involves not only a splitting into distinct entities, "subjects", but also a means of allocating personnel and resources, structuring the school day, defining the tasks of learners and organising the very processes and environments of learning. This array of functions is indicative of the power of an idea once it becomes lodged in social and institutional structures. Knowledge itself is sometimes elevated through logical analysis into divisions of a quite fundamental, timeless category (27). However, for purposes of school curriculum planning, design and development, no less important than those categories, which are in any case contested, is an approach which treats subject divisions as historically and socially determined and concerns itself with evidence of the uses and applications of knowledge in school and everyday life. Looking to the future, and that is precisely where curriculum designers must look, we see a clash between the more traditional, orthodox view of subjects and the apparatus of timetables, textbooks and instructional pedagogy surrounding them, and the emerging if still inchoate knowledge and information-based society. The latter emphasizes the generation of knowledge, access to and uses of it in quite complex, machine-operated systems which people can learn to use and the establishment of national and international networks which can be entered by those who know the procedures. All of this, surely, requires a radical re-appraisal of our traditional categories. What, therefore, is the school's role in this regard, and how well is it being served, either by the import of quantities of hardware accompanied by mediocre or irrelevant software or by moves being made to intensify and strengthen the present divisions of the curriculum?

Student performance

The reinforcement of present curricular patterns referred to in the preceding paragraph is most evident in the cycles of objectives, content, resources for learning and testing which seem to be proliferating. Put very simply, too much of the curriculum seems to be being trivialised in a quest for efficiency and standards, instead of being educative. It is tested and performance-dominated. The objectives in practice are too often those that are yielded by a review of test content and of teaching to the test. The authority of the tester and of the textbook writer seems to set the goals of the teacher and hence the targets of the learners. Granted the importance of assessment in teaching and learning, the need for the school to account to its paymasters, the practical utility and the high technical quality of much of the testing and text material being used, we question the suitability of this model and the assumptions it makes about performance as an educational as distinct from a behavioural manipulation enterprise. It is not at all clear how this preoccupation with test-related teaching can foster intellectual independence, initiative, creativity, integration of theory and practice, global thinking, communication skills or several other major stated objectives of schooling. For these purposes, it is not that tests per se are unsuitable, but that they need to be given less prominence, to play a lesser role in a more comprehensive and varied profile of student performances and become handmaidens not arbiters of education.

Quality: Can we be excellent and equal too?

The tension between improving opportunities for all students to perform well in school and the quest for a high standard of specialised knowledge and training is one aspect of the quality debate. Another is the meaning of "good performance", "useable skills", "high standards" and the formulations of the desired outcomes of education. Despite the most strenuous efforts to ameliorate the situation, wide disparities of provision, access and opportunity to participate exist, both within single schools, according to circumstances like home background, and between schools, school districts and systems. Schooling continues to reinforce relative advantage: the more there is of it the greater the gap between high and low achievers. So far from helping to lessen the gap, a strict regimen of schooling and the aforementioned expansion of performance testing may intensify them. This is as much a broad social problem as it is an educational one and we feel it will not be resolved, insofar as the school can resolve it, unless curriculum and pedagogy can become more developmental, criterion-referenced and grounded in universal areas of human experience. A competitive style grounded in academically-defined basic subjects is a poor substitute. There is a further set of dilemmas to which we have drawn attention: the current national preoccupation, in some of the reports, with a narrowly-defined set of subject-specific "core" learnings, sits uncomfortably with the pedagogical and psycho-sociological analyses of the varied characteristics and interests of students in school, with which the State systems have also aligned themselves. We are suggesting that there is need for still further effort to design a revitalised core curriculum, if indeed standards are to be raised and developmental orientation to be achieved in practice. A great deal more work seems to be needed to effect a reconciliation of these approaches.

Localism and centralism

The traditional locus of control of and provision for schools, the district, provides us with a necessary but by no means sufficient means of understanding how decisions are made about education. Whereas the idea of localism has powerful impact on the imagination and provides much of the language not to say folklore of school provision, in reality the emergence of powerful State initiatives and the impact of supra-local structures of accreditation, testing, policy and programme planning and so forth provides another perspective. An overriding consideration, at present, is the problem of providing adequate budgets: educational change is costly, federally-supported programmes have declined, and there is the ever-present issue of how best to raise local funds in what is often a highly-charged political climate. Complex negotiations and frequent communications are part of the answer to the problem of gaining support for educational policies in a politically sensitive situation of divided and balanced powers. If we work back over several of the issues we have already identified, a question arises as to just how the broader strategies of reform are to be implemented. It is assumed that powerful State policies will increasingly form and shape district and school initiatives. Alternatively, might these larger policies be derivative from and secondary to the enterprise, initiative and productive work of the schools themselves? In the American setting, there is no simple or obvious answer to these questions. We pose them, not so much in the expectation of receiving one, but as a way of highlighting the rootedness of reform measures in structured, political and fiscal issues, which are local as much as they are central.

Participation and authority

The contrast we have drawn between the instructional model of the teacher working in a highly-structured and hierarchical school, and a collegial, professional model of teaching and school policy-making brings out an issue, even if it overdraws a difference. Of course, it is ultimately those who appoint principals and are directly responsible for the running of schools who will determine whether a more directive or more participatory style will be adopted. Yet it seems pertinent to ask whether the kinds of changes and developments that we have addressed in this report are more likely to be facilitated by one style of leadership and management than another. Although it may seem obvious that a high profile, energetic and crisply efficient form of management suits the mood of the country and corresponds with the prevailing sense of urgency and crisis, we are not convinced that this will be the best solution. The problems are not straightforward, they are numerous and complex, and the demands made on the resourcefulness and ingenuity of the education profession are growing, not diminishing. "Participation" is one way of saying that there should be a much wider engagement with these problems, and more positive and varied roles for teachers conceived as professional educators. "Authority" in education is not reducible to the affirmation of power and control, however skilfully and subtly done. The authority of the educational process is one which invites dialogue, debate and discussion, openness and reflectiveness, not closure and the abruptness of the known right answer. In a democracy which believes itself to be facing a crisis it would seem worth seeking new ways of sharing the decision-making, dispersing the authority and remaining open-minded about the efficacy of the ready-made solution. The establishment of task forces, commissions and other dynamic responses to the call for reform is certainly one way of achieving this. Action of that kind has been one of the most conspicuous features of the nation-wide reform movement. It is our belief that such action needs to be mindful that improvement of the school must also be improvement by the school.

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